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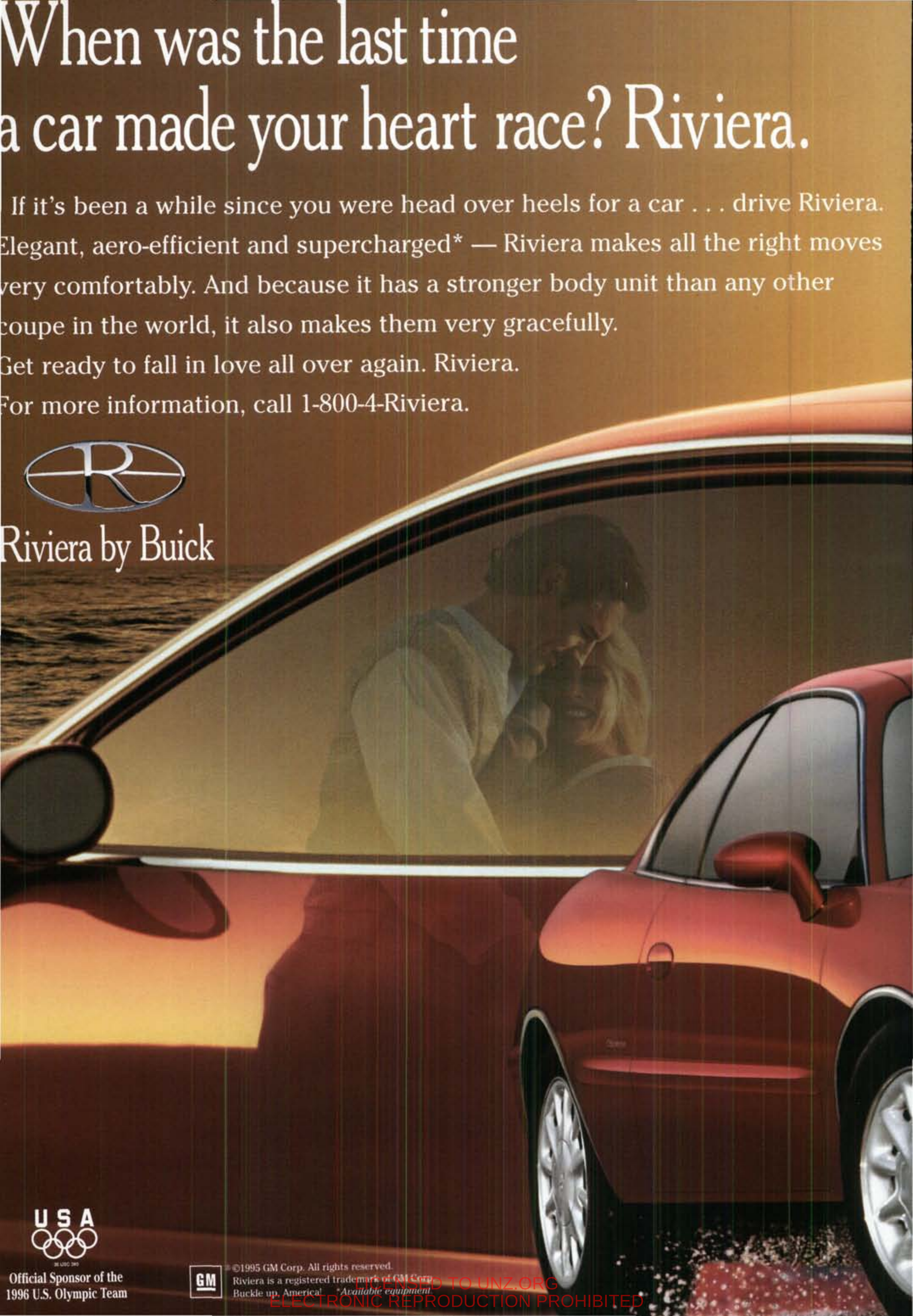

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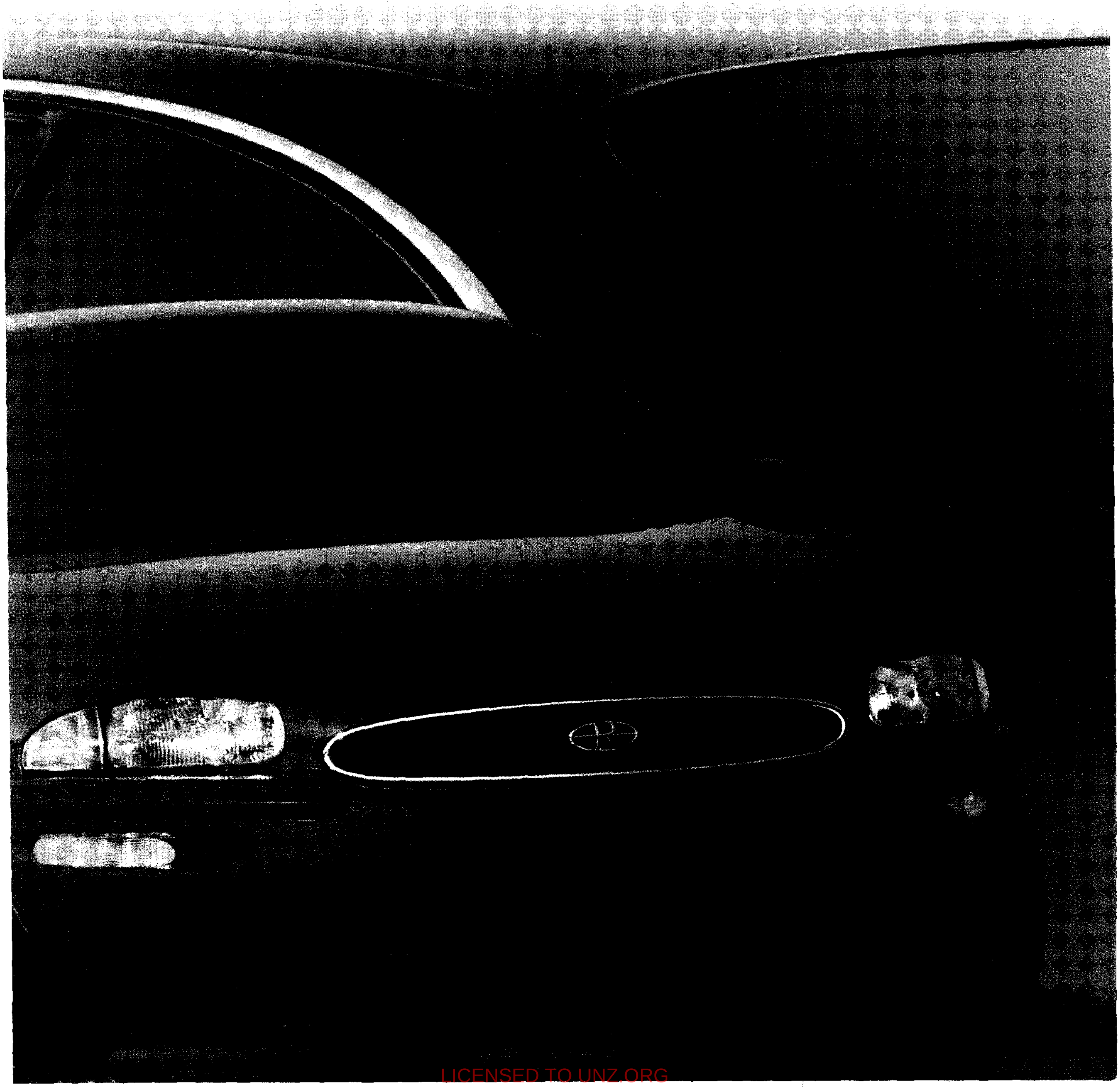

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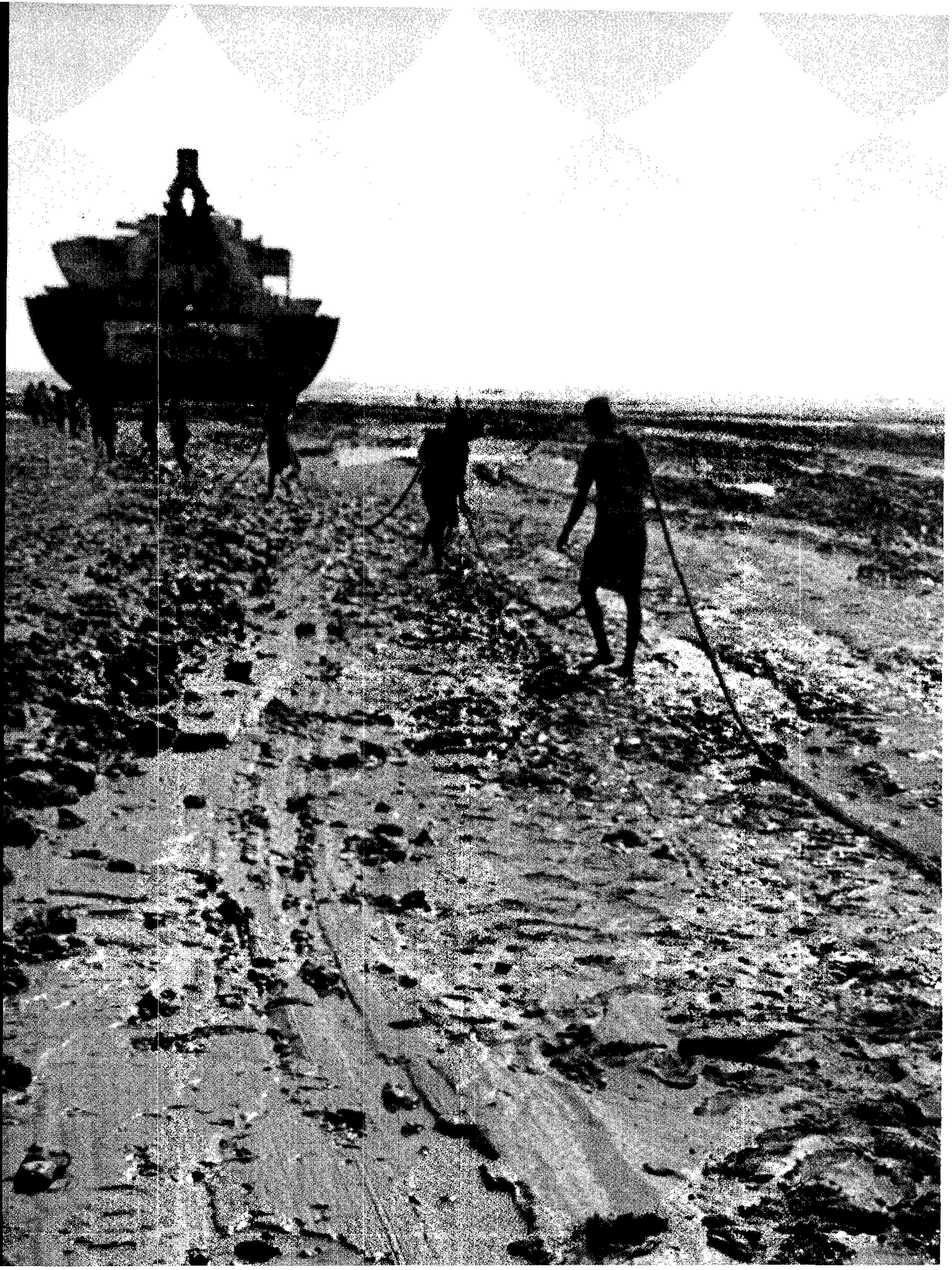

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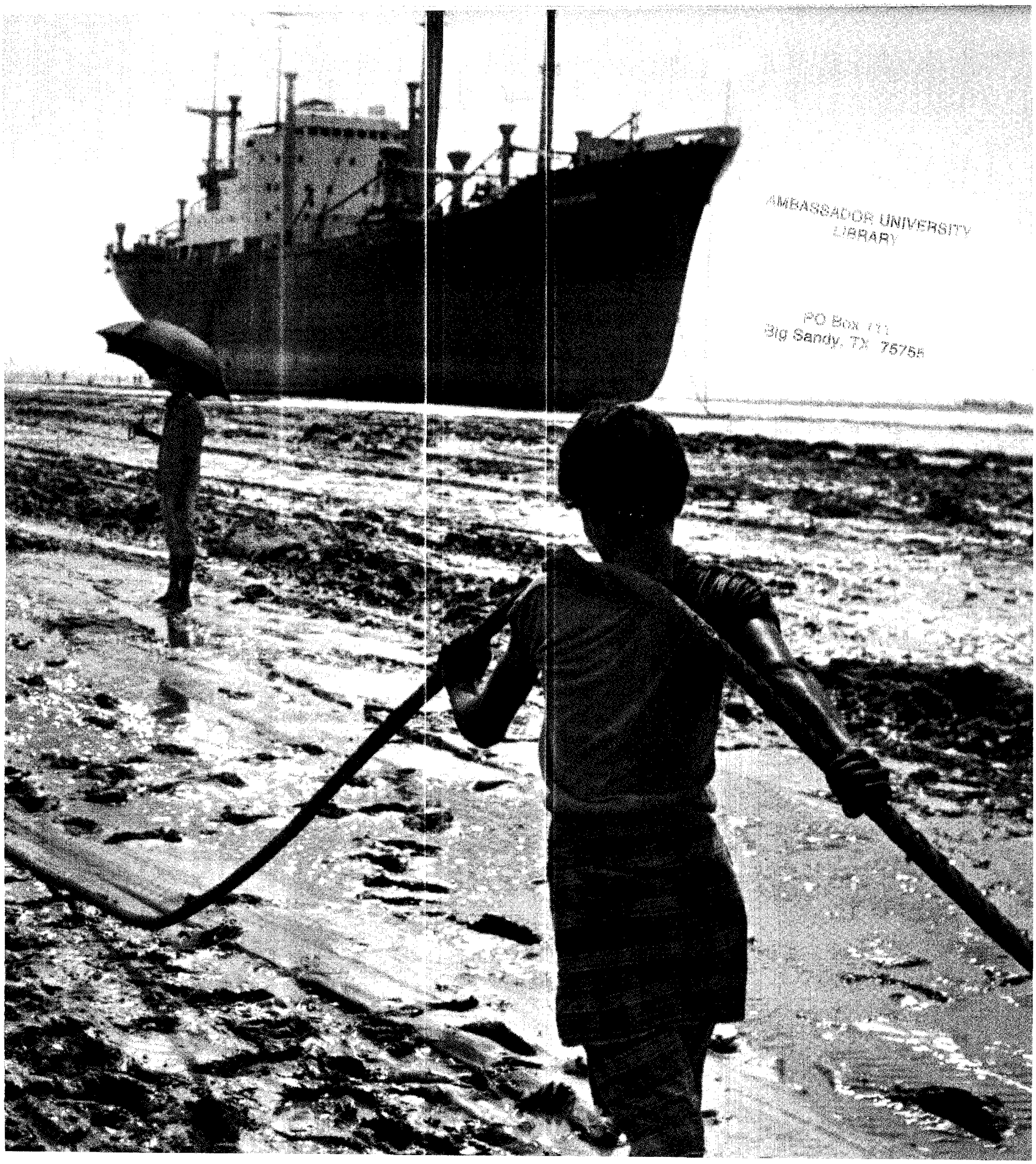

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THE NEW YORKER

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THE NEW YORKER (ISSN 0028-792X), published weekly (except for six combined issues: the last week of February and the first week of March, the last week of April and the first week of May, the last week of June and the first week of July, the last week of August and the first week of September, the last two weeks of October, and the last two weeks of December) by The New Yorker Magazine, Inc., 20 W. 43rd St., N.Y., N.Y. 10036. Vol. LXXI, No. 45, January 22, 1996. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. Authorized as second-class mail by the Post Office Department, Ottawa, Canada, and for payment of postage in cash. Canadian Publication Mail Sales Product Agreement No.190969. Canadian goods-and-services-tax registration number R123242885. Registered as a newspaper at the British Post Office. Subscription rates: In U.S. and possessions, one year, $39.95; two years, $72.00. In Canada, one year, $83.00 (includes G.S.T.). In Germany, one year, DM290. Mail orders to: IP Internationle Presse, Distribution & Marketing GmbH, Waldstr. 70, D-63128 Dietzenbach, Germany. Other foreign subscriptions, one year, $91.00, payable in advance.

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AT BOOKSTORES NATIONWIDE
William Morrow

COMMENT

FRANÇOIS PREMIER

The first "Mitterrandist," and the last.

There were Frenchmen who never expected François Mitterrand to die, because Mitterrand was just like France—ludicrously, gloriously untouched by the inconveniences of reality. Other leaders, in other countries, rise and fall on their health, their crimes, and their policies, but the man who was France's President for fourteen years—the longest Presidency of Charles de Gaulle's Fifth Republic—managed to survive by borrowing against the judgments of his own posterity. You could call it chutzpah, or self-infatuation, or a classic case of *La France, c'est moi*. No one else (except, of course, de Gaulle himself) could have pulled off such a perfect parody of Frenchness and persuaded everyone that it was high drama. Mitterrand was at once partisan and collaborator, socialist and capitalist, republican and Christian, classicist and romanticist, paterfamilias and philanderer, man of honor and patron of thieves. He even managed to be fit and failing, since it now turns out that for his first eleven years in the Élysée he hid the fact of the cancer that last week finally killed him.

The death of a French President is a moment for tidying up the collective memory—the moment when "posture" becomes "stature," and a politician becomes a statesman. So it is probably useful to remember that in the campaign for Mitterrand's successor—he left office last May—his own Socialist Party did not invoke his name, nor did he attempt to invoke it on the Party's behalf. He had pulled the Socialist ladder up after him as he climbed it, and had made it clear that as President of France he was "above" politics—which the French took, accurately, to mean that he was up to something with the other side. This has a lot to do with why the French missed him once he was out of office and relatively harmless. They began to prefer the Mitterrand they had lost to the politicians they were left with—ordinary politicians, so transparently ordinary as to be indistinguishable from the politicians in Germany or Italy or Spain, or even in America. Mitterrand was a little like the French he spoke: he shone brightest at his least substantial. His genius was to turn his own survival into an affair of state, to persuade people that his most cynical, shameless manipulations—he abandoned his colleagues, he abandoned his party, he indulged his friends in the kind of corruption that could have meant impeachment in another country—were manifestations of the idea of France.

The French admired Mitterrand. They admired his lugubrious self-regard. They admired the way he carried an old copy of Montaigne and pulled it out whenever

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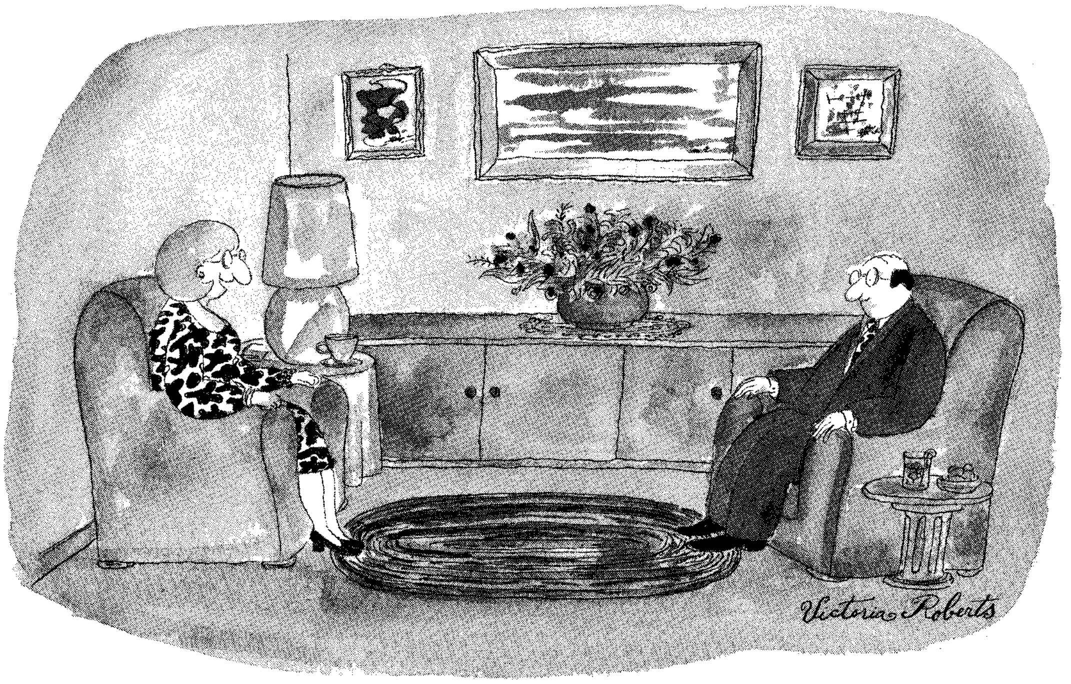
anybody took his picture. They admired the heroic images of a French life which he stage-managed so adroitly. There was the attack on his life, in 1959, by mysterious assassins nobody ever found, in front of the Paris Observatory; it got his name in all the papers and launched him in Presidential politics. There was the inauguration in 1981, set to the strains of Beethoven's Ninth, and timed so precisely that Mitterrand could cross Paris, visit the Pantheon crypt, and emerge at the opening of the first verse of the "Ode to Joy." There was the brave announcement in the fall of 1994 that the President was dying; that was timed for the moment a book appeared with the news that in 1943 the Vichy government's most exalted medal had been pinned on François Mitterrand's lapel. A few skeptics chuckled, and said that Mitterrand wasn't dying—that he was going to live to be a hundred. When he did die, at seventy-nine, he left a last testament, handwritten in blue ink on a couple of sheets of paper. It surprised no one in France that he had used his final hours to direct his funeral: no speeches, the family plot, and only two bouquets—tea roses and yellow and purple irises.

Mitterrand, for his part, is said to have admired de Gaulle; he sat behind de Gaulle's Boulle desk and received visitors in front of the tapestry you see in photographs of the General. But he didn't want to be a second de Gaulle, and, when he cast his lot with the Socialists, it may have had less to do with socialism than with the fact that he wanted his own moment in his own name. He wanted to be the first "Mitterrandist" and he will probably be the last one, since after fourteen years with the President not many people can say what a Mitterrandist is except a man who identified himself with France with such an imperious, almost innocent detachment from the people of France that it often passed for (and sometimes succeeded as) a kind of grand paternalism. De Gaulle, in the interests of healing France, had tried to convince the country that all Frenchmen had been *résistants*, and fifty years later Mitterrand, in his own interests, tried to convince the country that all Frenchmen could have been collaborators. That was the difference between them, and, finally, it may not have been such a big difference. Mitterrand said last year that the story of his own transformation from Vichy *haut fonctionnaire* to Free French *résistant* was a lesson to France—a lesson in how life and consciousness and "values" could turn a narrow, provincial boy into a true French patriot. But he didn't tell that story in the years when it might have meant something to the country. He told it when he had to, and, in a way, his career was like that—more about timing than about integrity, or even politics. No one really knows where, in the end, his convictions lay—or whether he had many convictions. We do know that he disliked Communists—especially French Communists—and that he formed his first government in a coalition with those Communists. He nationalized the forty-three biggest private banks and businesses in the country, and watched the economy slide, and then, when the franc began to collapse and France threatened to collapse with it, he threw the Communists out. It was the only practical solution to a crisis of his own making—a solution that is now referred to as the culmination of a crafty plan for marginalizing the French Communist Party, as if marginalizing Communists had been what he had in mind when he brought the country to the edge of bankruptcy. We also know that he disliked fascists, but in 1986 he rewrote the election laws, hoping to divide the right to the Socialists' advantage, and in so doing he put Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front into the National Assembly. That is now referred to as Mitterrand's project for coöpting and neutralizing the extreme right. He may have disliked Socialists most of all. He had rebuilt the French Socialist Party after the war—had done so practically single-handed—but he was ready to destroy it a couple of years ago when he denounced Michel Rocard, who had been his own prime minister and was the Socialist chosen to succeed him. He backed a Marseilles crook who was running against Rocard's slate for the European Parliament, and he told friends who wanted to know *his* choice for a successor that his list ended with "my dog, and then Rocard." It may be that he just didn't want there to be a second Mitterrand. He needn't have worried. The funeral he arranged for himself was an act no ordinary politician would try to follow. Think of the Requiem Mass at Notre-Dame broadcast against images of stark, almost Protestant mourning in his home town. Think of the funeral cortege, with his wife and their two sons followed by his mistress and *their* daughter. Think of the kings and the commoners, of Paris and *la France profonde*. Think of Mitterrand, who wanted to be "France," and ended up as an impresario of himself.

—JANE KRAMER



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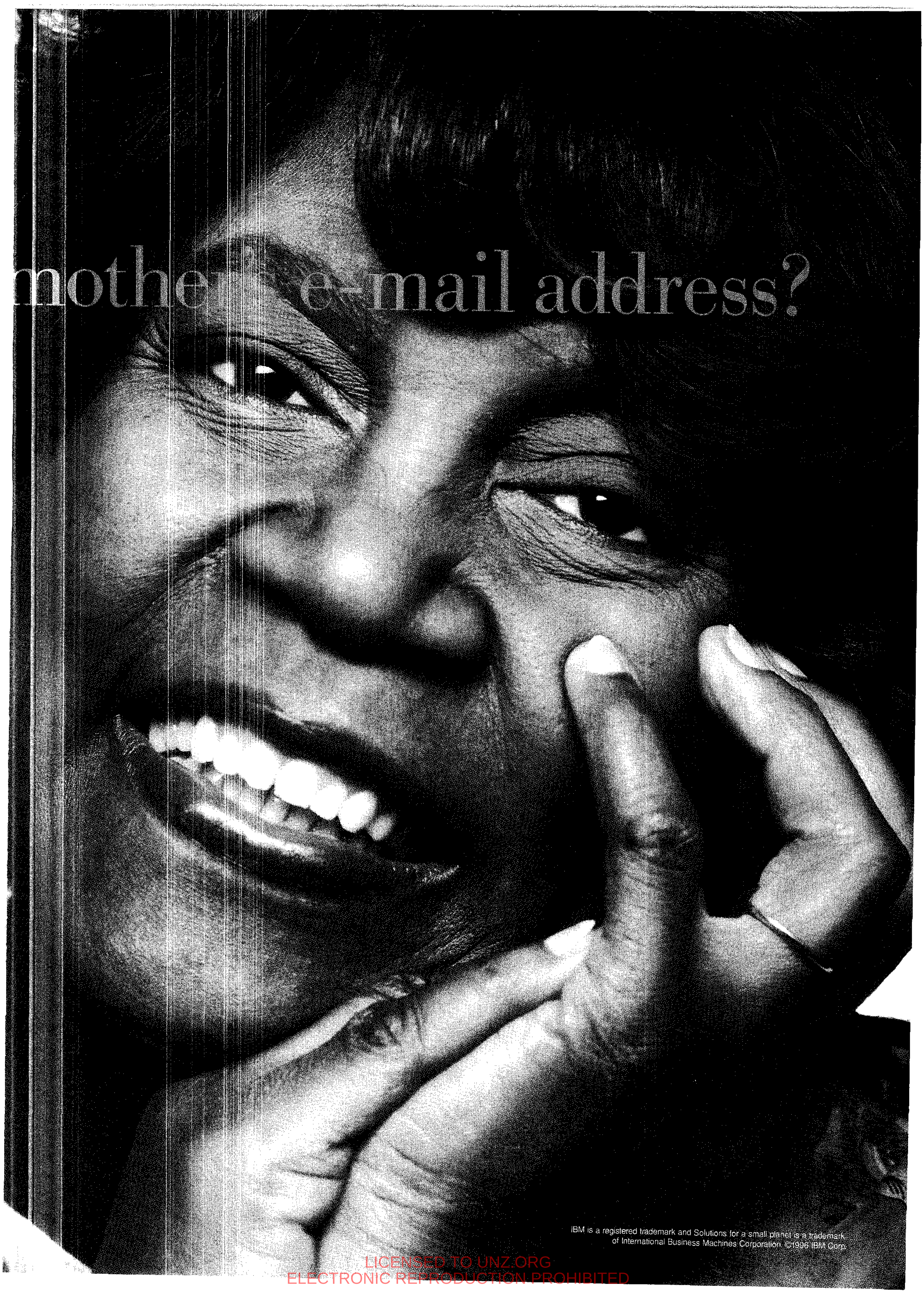
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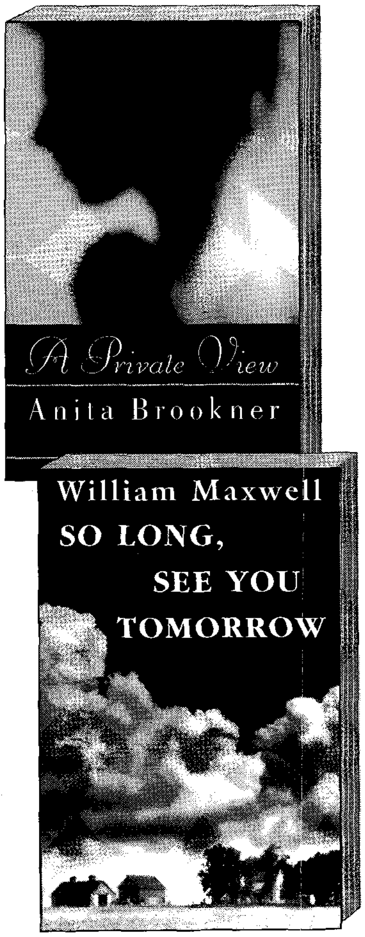

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IN THE MAIL

WHOSE CHOICE?

I have never been comfortable with the rhetoric on either side of the abortion debate; the self-aggrandizement of both the pro-choice and the pro-life forces has tended to muddy the waters of serious discourse. But, like the majority of Americans, I have reluctantly opted for personal choice over the often dubious rights of the unborn. Jane Mayer's Comment ("A Harder Choice," December 4th) was a horrifying awakening. It is unbelievable that Mayer could describe a procedure as ghastly as "partial-birth abortion" and then defend it as "the only remedy left" to certain parents. Mayer offers the notion that pro-choice activists should acknowledge that in certain circumstances abortion may be wrong, yet when she provides a cogent example she sanctions it as a valid reproductive right. This article is a sad example of dyed-in-the-wool pro-choicers' tactics of entertaining the idea that some abortions may have to be curtailed but ultimately concluding that the mother is always more important than the unborn child, whether the child is deformed or not, and whether wanted or not.

ARTHUR SWIFT
Bridgewater, N.J.

While Ms. Mayer maintains that some partial-birth abortions are necessary, to preserve the mother's life, she suggests that activists defending these "right" partial-birth abortions are undermined by their refusal to admit that other partial-birth abortions may be selfish and "wrong." By allowing pro-life rhetoric to frame her argument, Mayer plays into a "this abortion bad," "this abortion good" game that puts her a step away from embracing the notion that political leaders should decide which abortions are right and which wrong and should legislate accordingly. It is indeed a slippery slope from demonizing one abortion procedure to outlawing all abortions. After all, those of us who have worked in abortion clinics know that there are ample reasons to declare most first-trimester abortions selfish, unnecessary, and wrong. Something we pro-choice Americans need to recall is that the question abortion asks of us is not "Does abortion involve moral decision-making?" but "Who shall be responsible for the moral decision-making that every abortion entails?" For pro-choice Americans, the answers to the question may differ ("The woman," "The woman and her partner," "The woman and her God"), but those differences have always been the point of being pro-choice.

CAROLE CUNNINGHAM
Nashville, Tenn.

In an otherwise excellent Comment, Jane Mayer errs if she means to suggest that mainstream adherents of choice are pro-abortion. Nothing could be further from the truth. We acknowledge that for some people all abortions are morally wrong and for all people some abortions are morally wrong. What we vehemently oppose is legislating the prohibitionists' morality, which is that for all people all abortions are always wrong.

RICHARD E. POOLE
Wilmington, Del.

NO THANKS

David Owen's December 18th Shouts & Murmurs made it clear to me that thank-you notes are not necessary. Neither are gifts.

R. SHERMAN
New York City

Letters should be as brief as possible, and sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "In the Mail," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. They may be edited for length and clarity.

What gives a woman style?

"I'M NOTHING TO LOOK AT," the Duchess of Windsor admitted. Rita de Acosta Lydig paid no attention to what was "in fashion." Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis had none of the attributes of the ideal American girl, and Diana Vreeland never had money. Yet each of these women had a personal magnetism and allure so strong that she could "dominate a room from a footstool." How did they do it? And what can you learn from them?

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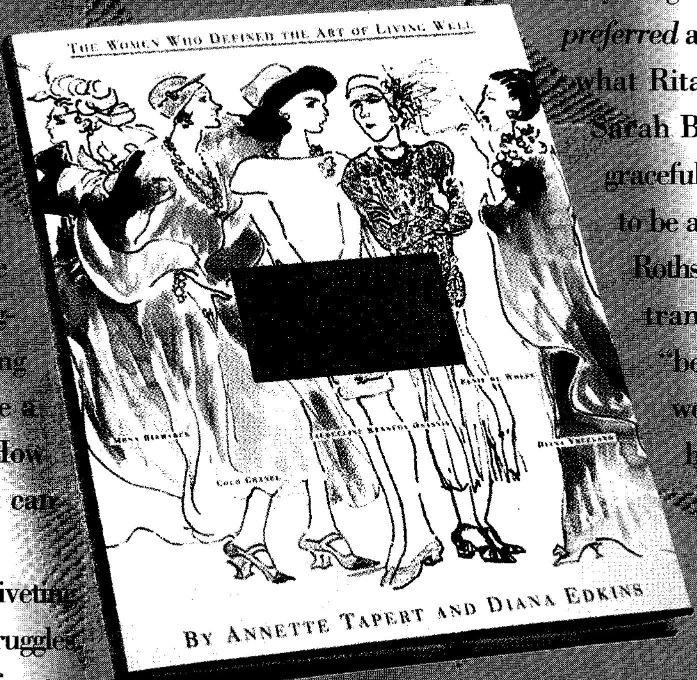
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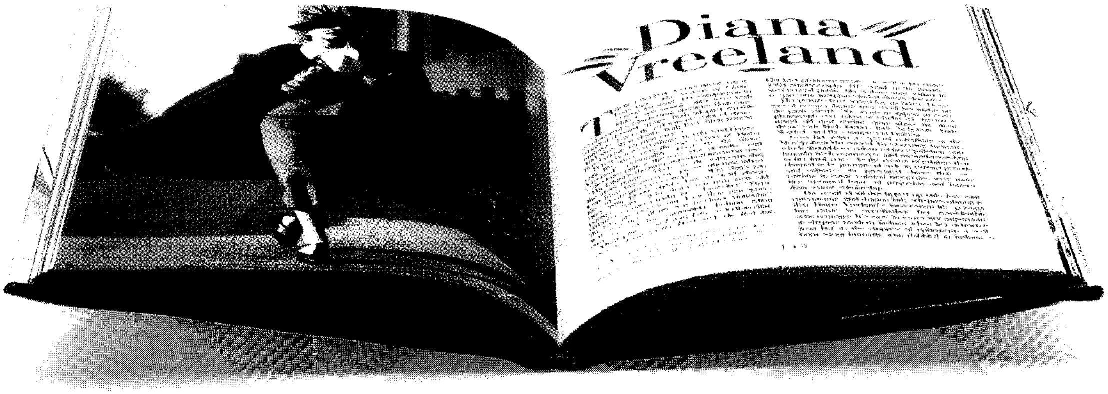
Diana Vreeland

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THE THEATRE

Rising Son

The role of Edmund, the bastard villain of "King Lear," has traditionally been a career booster, and it certainly ought to advance the fortunes of Jared Harris, who plays the part in the Public's new production. When asked about the character's enduring potency, the young actor zeroes right in: "Edmund is a prototype Lear. What he does is what I imagine Lear to have done to acquire his kingdom."

Edmund may be the perfect challenge for Harris right now. Having shed any telltale mannerisms he acquired during his apprenticeship (at Duke University and London's Central School of Speech and Drama), he has recently done fine work both onstage ("Henry IV," "Ecstasy") and onscreen ("Smoke," "Nadja"). And while his ruddy looks may call to mind his father, Richard Harris, the son is consciously carving out his own identity. Later this month, when "I Shot Andy Warhol," an independent feature in which he does a hilarious impersonation of the title artist, is screened at the Sundance Film Festival, journalists should be trumpeting his arrival. "I knew the part of Warhol would be a break for whoever played it," Harris says confidently. "It's the appeal of enigma."

Would Warhol have liked "King Lear"? The actor grins at the notion. "Definitely. He liked things that were long and boring."

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Bed and Sofa—A new musical based on director Abram Room's 1926 silent film about the Moscow housing shortage. Music by Polly Pen. Libretto by Laurence Klavan. Andre Ernotte directed. In previews. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874.)

Blue Window—Craig Lucas's 1984 play centers on a party given by a nervous hostess and attended by six other young New Yorkers. Directed by Joe Mantello. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

King Lear—F. Murray Abraham has the title role in this production of Shakespeare's tragedy, which also stars Jared Harris as Edmund and Jeffrey Wright as the Fool. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

Mata Hari—A revised version of the 1967 Martin Charnin–Ed Thomas–Jerome Coopersmith musical, about the exotic dancer who was executed on charges of espionage and her love affair with the French secret-service agent who entrapped her. Presented by the York Theatre Company. Directed by Mr. Charnin. In previews. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820.)

Measure for Measure—Theatre for a New Audience presents Shakespeare's play, under the direction of Barry Kyle. In previews through the Jan. 20 matinée. Opens that evening at 7:30. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

The Preservation Society—A former débutante returns to North Carolina to tell her conservative family about her plans to marry her girlfriend, in this comedy by Wm. S. Leavengood. In previews through Jan. 20. Opens Jan. 21 at 3. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

Sheba—A new musical, about King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Book and lyrics by Sharleen Cooper Cohen. Music by Gary William Friedman. In previews through Jan. 20. Opens Jan. 21 at 7. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)

Virgins and Other Myths—The gay playwright Colin Martin gives the lowdown on his sexual history, in his solo show. In previews. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

Working Class—A return engagement of Richard Hoehler's one-man, eight-character play, which takes a look at American laborers. Opens Jan. 17 at 8. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 315-9434.)

The Yiddish Trojan Women—Three Jewish sisters and their Polish refugee grandmother deal with personal and political predicaments in this play by Carol Braverman, set in Brooklyn in the eighties. In previews through Jan. 21. Opens Jan. 22 at 8. (American Jewish Theatre, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Bring In 'da Noise/Bring In 'da Funk—In attempting not only to return tap to black culture but to give black culture back to tap, director George C. Wolfe and dancer-choreographer Savion Glover have made a drama that charts, with heroic energy, the evolution of the African-American beat from its rural Southern beginnings to its Northern urbanization and on to its present hip-hop incarnation in the choreography of Glover and his homeboy hoofers. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/4/95.) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400. Closes Jan. 28.)

Dark Ride—Len Jenkin's 1981 comic metaplay simulates a fairground ride (the audience is situated in the midst of a set that suggests a roller coaster) that passes through B-movie territory, both American and Mexican. An occult oculist, an unctuous gem trader, and a chef who travels with the putative mummy of John Wilkes Booth are among the characters whose stories are linked, whimsically if self-consciously, by the aggressively anti-linear principle of coincidence. The mischievous script needs whipping into shape, but a generally undisciplined cast and director (Julian Webber) have spared the rod. (SoHo Rep, 46 Walker St. 334-0962.)

Dick Gregory Live—The master returns in a hilarious two-hour riff skewering our fondest end-of-millennium hypocrisies and delusions. Gregory, who is equally well known today as a civil- and human-rights activist and as the first mainstream black stand-up comedian, comments on present-day folly with an astringent yet avuncular air. His bite, although it has mellowed with time, is still sharp as he ruminates on everything from Bosnia to O.J. to airplane travel. We'd all be better off if we followed his advice to drink eight glasses of water a day and laugh a lot. The production, by the Negro Ensemble Company, moves to the 47th Street Theatre on Jan. 23. (Samuel Beckett, 412 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

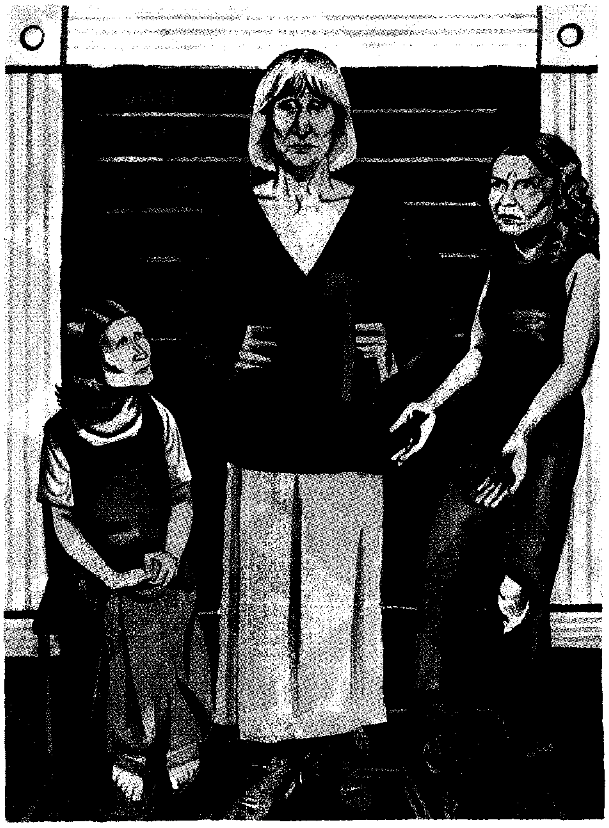
Double Identity—The message in this Yiddish musical comedy (based on a Sholom Aleichem story) is clear: it's hard to be a Jew. The actors perform with conviction, especially Zypora Spaisman—the matriarch of Yiddish theatre—whose uncomplicated gestures say a great deal. In Yiddish; simultaneous English or Russian translation is available. (Folksbiene Playhouse, 123 E. 55th St. 755-2231. Closes Jan. 21.)

An Epidog—Mabou Mines and the Gertrude Stein Repertory Theatre present Lee Breuer's latest play—the second in a trilogy—about Rose the dog, now dead, and her between-incarnations adventures in Bardo, the Buddhist waiting room for souls. With Bunraku puppets designed by Julie Archer. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-9684. Closes Feb. 4.)

The Father—A new adaptation, by Richard Nelson, of Strindberg's 1887 tragedy, starring Frank Langella and Gail Strickland. Directed by Clifford Williams. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

The Food Chain—The situations in Nicky Silver's new play are familiar and sitcom-ish, but the writing is tangy and memorably funny, and the actors—especially Hope Davis, as a dithery poet, and Phyllis Newman, as a long-suffering Jewish matron whose idea of listening is to talk—give smart, wonderfully fresh performances. Robert Falls directed. (9/11/95) (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

The Grey Zone—Tim Blake Nelson's true story of the *Sonderkommandos*, the Jews who worked in the gas chambers and crematoriums of the death camps. David Van Tieghem's eerie,



Barbara Caren Sims, Olympia Dukakis, and Ann Scurria, in "The Hope Zone."

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NY

A GOOD CHOICE FOR YOUR IRA, 401(k), OR SEP/SARSEP evocative sound design (the first thing we hear is the firing up of the ovens) is one of the finest components of Douglas Hughes's nearly flawless production (which also makes provocative use of silence, as when a man waits for the gas to do its work so he can do his). Nelson's strength is monologues, not narrative; the script begins disjointedly, and at first it seems no more than another reminder that the Nazis were evil. But the plot gels, the central characters struggle with the question of whether they are killers themselves, and the play—greatly helped by Gus Rogerson's blistering performance as one of the organizers of a rebellion—acquires shocking power. (MCC, 120 W. 28th St. 727-7765.)

Calista Flockhart and Austin Pendleton, in "The Impostor."

KAREN CALDICOTT

Hello, Dolly!—There is much to like about Carol Channing—the comic timing, the speaking voice, the star quality—but the evening is one long curtain call, and a bit of a strain on the nerves, as she attempts to prove over and over that she can do it all as well in her seventies as she could in her forties. Lee Roy Reams directed. (11/27/95) (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

The Hope Zone—Olympia Dukakis plays Countess Wilhelmena Deach, an A.A. adherent and the owner of a run-down Maryland resort, in this play by Kevin Heelan. (Circle Repertory Company, 159 Bleecker St. 239-6200.)

The Impostor—A provocative drama about success, power, and rape in New York's dog-eat-dog publishing world. The dialogue is witty and terse, though some of the insider jokes may be lost on those who are sane enough to have stayed out of the media business. The entire cast is impressive, and Calista Flockhart and Austin Pendleton are riveting in their interpretations of insecure, self-hating characters. (Workhouse, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 967-0400.)

Jam On the Groove—Ten loose-limbed numbers—including a slapstick shadow dance, a martial-arts fantasia, a dance-noir detective story, and a shirtless six-man undulation that could serve as a master class on abdominal development—show off the impressive range of hip-hop choreography. All the dancers get the chance to flaunt their patented wiggles and spins, and the house rocks with a sort of call-and-response encouragement from the audience. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

Master Class—In Terrence McNally's new play, Zoe Caldwell portrays Maria Callas with steely, divaesque conviction, but the role is merely the sum of all the clichés that have been in circulation for years; the Callas who was a consummate professional and an inspired teacher—and a human being—is missing. Leonard Foglia directed. (11/27/95) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Mrs. Klein—Two London psychoanalysts—the famous Melanie Klein (Uta Hagen) and her less renowned daughter, Melitta (Laila Robins)—face off in a murderous argument and proceed to browbeat each other with theory. Nicholas Wright's smart though schematic drama dissects Klein's tempestuous relationship with her high-strung daughter and shrewdly explores the autobiographical parallels to Klein's seminal thesis on the effects of parental neglect. Robins is excellent; Hagen is brilliant. (11/20/95) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

Molly Sweeney—Brian Friel's newest drama, about a woman whose vision is restored after a lifetime of blindness, stars Catherine Byrne, Jason Robards, and Alfred Molina. Friel is the director. (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Moon Over Buffalo—Ken Ludwig's backstage farce is as forgettable as Carol Burnett (whose last Broadway appearance was thirty years ago) is not: our reigning red-headed queen of comedy is delightful to behold. Tom Moore directed. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Picasso at the Lapin Agile—Steve Martin's comedy, set in a Paris bar in 1904, is not so much a play of ideas as a play of notions, about art, science, the twentieth century (oh, *that* old thing); it features Einstein and Picasso, sittin' around talkin' about how they're going to change the world, and contains a satisfying amount of Martin's coolly absurdist humor—but there's a certain sourness to the proceedings which may put you off, unless you happen to believe, as Martin seems to, that the arrival of rock and roll ruined everything. Say it ain't so, Steverino. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

The Revenger's Tragedy—In Cyril Tourneur's 1607 drama, which is guided by the dictate "When the bad bleed is the tragedy good," Vindice (Brian Frailey), a much abused gentleman, takes his revenge on a depraved, corrupt court. The Independent Theatre Company's feverish production seems to borrow elements from a Halloween spook house: torn velvet curtains, makeshift set, streams of blood, and shrill screams. In piling on the gore, it gives new meaning to the phrase "bad blood." Paul Todaro directed. (House of Candles Theatre, 99 Stanton St. 353-3088. Closes Jan. 27.)

Shut Up I Tell You—The latest work by the performance group Elevator Repair Service combines—among other elements—slapstick, horror tales, and a fascination with outdated technology. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Closes Jan. 28.)

Swinging on a Star—A stylish, heartfelt showcase for Johnny Burke's songs. The cast and band are nearly perfect; the show was written and directed by Michael Leeds and choreographed, brilliantly, by Kathleen Marshall. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

True Crimes—Romulus Linney's new play, set in Appalachia in 1900, shows how a few of our more common failings—lust, greed, fascination with the misfortunes of others—can lead us to our doom. Unfortunately, the characters are either single-faceted exemplars of weakness or unbelievably naïve, so their descent into crime doesn't have much impact. Despite some fine performances, neither the cast nor Linney's direction can save the script. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 254-1109. Closes Jan. 21.)

The Universe—In Richard Foreman's latest mind-wrenching vaudeville, three cheerfully desperate oddballs (James Urbaniak, Tony Torn, and Mary McBride) attempt to discover universal truths, behave normally, and find love in a thoroughly unknowable, abnormal, and inhospitable world. Though it's a woefully dizzying enterprise, their doomed efforts do not go unrewarded: there are generous doses of warm milk on hand. As usual, Foreman encumbers his actors with a funhouse set and delightfully unwieldy props. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

Valley Song—Athol Fugard's first post-apartheid play, set in a rural village in South Africa, is an intimate piece, with only two actors. The author himself (who also directed) plays two parts, a white Afrikaaner and a colored tenant farmer, and Lisa Gay Hamilton plays the farmer's young granddaughter, who has a gift for singing and wants to go to Johannesburg. The play tells a simple story—the grandfather faces the prospect of losing the only family he has as well as the patch of land he has farmed all his life—but its glimpses of the new South Africa are subtly, richly resonant. It shows the fear and the heartbreak that come with change, and reminds us that change doesn't always deliver on its promises. Hamilton gives a radiant, openhearted performance; Fugard is solid, though his role-shifting causes some confusion. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes Jan. 21.)

Victor/Victoria—Julie Andrews, Tony Roberts, and Michael Nouri star in a theatrical version of the 1982 movie. The score (by Henry Mancini) is generic, and the book (by Blake Edwards, who also directed) is patchwork. The leggy Rachel York, as a blond bimbo, at least enjoys herself—and the audience enjoys her, too. (11/20/95) (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

When Ladies Battle—A spirited production of Eugène Scribe and Ernest Legouvé's 1851 comedy, about political and amorous intrigue. Michael Feingold's new translation is clear and funny; John Rando's precise, witty direction makes each absurd plot twist a greater delight than the one before and matches the verbal humor with charming bits of physical comedy. The cast is also first-rate, particularly Arnie Burton, as a character who is "brave and timid at the same time" and somehow makes his face convey both traits at once, to hilarious effect. (Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802. Closes Jan. 27.)

Wonderful Time—In Jonathan Marc Sherman's new play, a confused young man (Josh Hamilton) is dumped by his girlfriend on the eve of his best friend's wedding but picks up another young woman (Marin Hinkle) to be his date. Their weekend together, though fresh and funny in parts, can't transcend the tired theme of twenty-something love; the malaise of Generation X has become an all-too-travelled road. But the acting is lively, and the use of black-and-white film footage to indicate time and place is a lovely touch. Directed by Tim Vasen. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523. Closes Jan. 31.)

LONG RUNS

AFTER-PLAY: Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **DEATH DEFYING ACTS:** Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GREASE!:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITHOUT REALLY TRYING:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . MISS SAIGON: Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . PARTY: Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321. . . . PERFECT CRIME: Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA: Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . ROB BECKER'S DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN: Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100. . . . SHOW BOAT: Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . . SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ: Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . STOMP: Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . SUNSET BOULEVARD: Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4007. . . . SYLVIA: John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. (Closes Jan. 28.) . . . TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING: St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET—Jan. 17 at 8: "Jeu de Cartes," "Calcium Light Night," "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," and "West Side Story Suite." . . . ¶ Jan. 18 at 8: "Watermill," "Allegro Brillante," and "Western Symphony." . . . ¶ Jan. 19 at 8: "Watermill" and "Who Cares?" . . . ¶ Jan. 20 at 2: "Donizetti Variations," "Barber Violin Concerto," and "The Four Temperaments." . . . ¶ Jan. 20 at 8: "Jeu de Cartes," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," and "Glass Pieces." . . . ¶ Jan. 21 at 3: "Prodigal Son," "2 & 3 Part Inventions," and "Glass Pieces." . . . ¶ Jan. 23 at 8: "Square Dance," "Tarantella," "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," and "La Sonnambula." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

"ALTOGETHER DIFFERENT"—Three weeks of performances by seven contemporary-dance companies, with programs that, in every case, include at least one première and one seasoned work. Jan. 17 and Jan. 20 at 8 and Jan. 21 at 2: PAULA JOSA-JONES PERFORMANCE WORKS, in "Wonderland" and the première of "Raving in Wind." . . . ¶ Jan. 18 at 8: SUNGSOO AHN PICK-UP GROUP, in "Bim," "Whatever," and two premières, "Underbelly" and "Queen." . . . ¶ Jan. 19 at 8 and Jan. 20 at 2: TERE O'CONNOR DANCE. The choreographer, who long ago mastered the art of mute eloquence, presents his first work using the spoken word. In his new trio, "Mother," O'Connor creates a dreamlike world in which the dancers' words don't necessarily dispel the mysteries of their behavior: a woman speaking in the perky rhythms of a commercial may actually be telling us her deepest feelings about motherhood and mortality; a man making an intimate confession mouthes the words while two women recite them with exaggerated male inflections. O'Connor's articulate dancers are fine actors, too. With last year's eerily powerful "Notes on Shame." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800.)

"L'AMOUR BLEU"—Tenor Thomas Bogdan returns with his musical masque on gay themes, abetted by singer-dancers Kenneth Lockwood, Randolph Curtis Rand, Robert Osborne, and Cliff Townsend, all guided by the evening's Terpsichore, choreographer Ching Gonzalez. (Danspace, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Jan. 18-21 at 8:30.)

AMY PIVAR DANCES—Pivar, a former Bill T. Jones dancer, collaborates with therapist Freda Rosen in "Hey Little Man!," a work inspired by Wilhelm Reich, the inventor of the orgone box. Arthur Aviles, another Jones dancer, joins Pivar in "Ecstasy of Communication." (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Jan. 18-20 at 8 and Jan. 21 at 3.)

YANCEYDANCE-THEATRE—Choreographer Leslie Yancey and her ten-member company perform "Window of Time," "Willie & Clothilde," "Quotidian Bliss," "Despite All Odds," and "Las Calaveras." (Merce Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. 614-0356. Jan. 19 at 9 and Jan. 20-21 at 8.)

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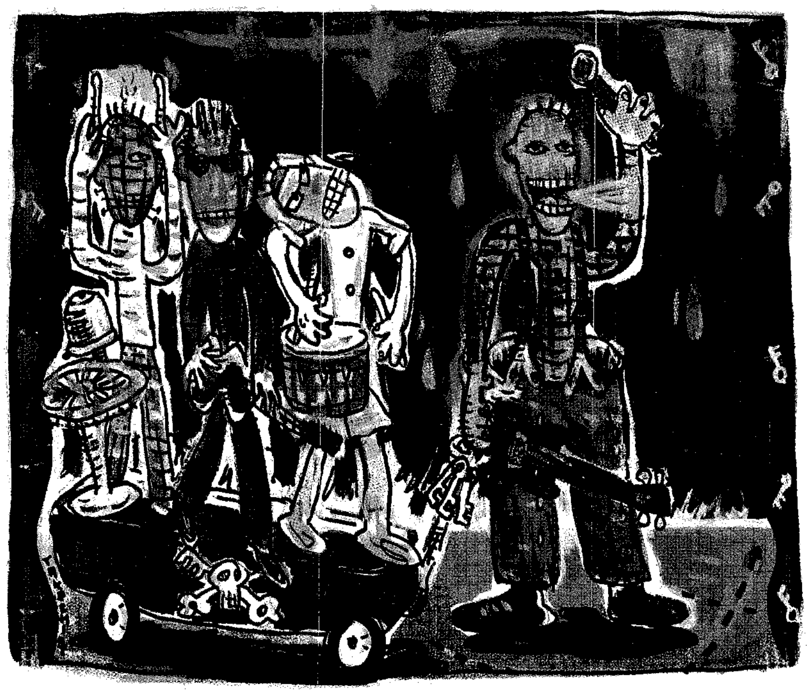
NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Ozzy Osbourne—As the former singer of Black Sabbath (and hence the Louis Pasteur of heavy metal), old Oz will probably never collect a plaque from the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. The staff may be afraid he'd bite something's head off. And the disrespect goes deeper: "Satanic claptrap" is the term that the editors of "The Rolling Stone Album Guide" apply to his work with Sabbath, while others level even unkinder words at his short-lived solo project, the Blizzard of Oz. But the forty-six-year-old rocker may have the last laugh: his To Hell with Retirement tour has been packing them in across the heartland. Have yourself a belated Halloween. (Meadowlands Arena. 1-201 935-3900. Jan. 18 at 8.)

Muriel Mwamba—Playing the music of Zambia. (Washington Square Church, 135 W. 4th St. 545-7536. Jan. 19 at 8.)

Tenores de Oniferi—A Sardinian vocal ensemble. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 362-8719. Jan. 20 at 8.)



Skeleton Key, at the Cooler.

TAKESHI TADATSU

CLUBS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Bar d'O, 29 Bedford St. (627-1580)—Low sofas, moderne ottomans, and venetian blinds make this mirrored living room the perfect spot for late-night love. Most nights, the music is up-to-the-minute seventies, but Tuesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, gender channeller **joey arias** sets the ceiling fans awhirl.

Blarney Star, 43 Murray St. (732-2873)—Home to fine Irish music every Friday night.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—This blue-on-blue club is an institution and knows it: how many other clubs sell their own belt buckles? Blues-guitar great **b. b. king** is in the house through Jan. 21. This is a pretty formal setting for B.B. and his guitar, Lucille, to be strutting their stuff in, but then again he's the man who put the uptown into the down-home Delta blues. Through decades' worth of trends, fads, and revivals, he's never strayed too far from his nineteen-forties R. & B.-rooted night-club vocal style. Once he starts dispensing gifts like "Sweet Little Angel" and "The Thrill Is Gone," you'll be in blues heaven. Dining.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Jan. 17: **jeffrey gaines** and **jill sobule.** Call Gaines an angry but sensitive young man: his brisk melodies and taut, driving arrangements recall singer-songwriters of the post-punk era, but his earnest lyrics are more evocative of James Taylor than of Elvis Costello. / In "I Kissed a Girl," her recent video hit, pixieish singer Sobule spurned a hunky Harlequin Romance prince for a woman. While this probably raised a few eyebrows, it only touched on what makes her so endearing. The songs on her new album display a sharp wit and a knack for memorable melodies. Live, she's engaging, and a few blasts from her electric guitar should help to decimate her ill-deserved reputation as a lightweight. Hot Tuna veteran and soon-to-be Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee **jorma kaukonen** plays deep acoustic blues on Jan. 18. **loudon wainwright iii** stops in Jan. 19-20. "Grown Man," the rollicking new album by this wily and warped tunesmith, includes everything from a song that was recorded in the shower (literally) to the outrageous "I Wish I Was a Lesbian" to a faithful rendition of Jimmie Rodgers' 1928 standard, "Treasures Untold." All songwriters should go this crazy when they're middle-aged.

Brownies, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—Jan. 17: **ben folds five.** From Chapel Hill, North Carolina, the headquarters of indie rock, come the fab sounds of this smart trio led by Ben Folds, who plays a wondrously jaunty baby grand and sings like a cross between Joe Jackson and Freddie Mercury. Jan. 18: Splendora. Jan. 20: The **swinging neckbreakers.**

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—A narrow, graffiti-strewn cave packed every evening with new and used bands. Jan. 20: Crisis. . . . ¶ Next door, the neat and comfortable testament to gentrification called CB's Gallery plays host to mellow avant-folk groups.

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Guitar master **roosevelt (booba) barnes** performs Jan. 19-20.

Continental Divide, 25 Third Ave., at St. Marks Pl. (529-6924)—Hipsters, punks, poseurs, N.Y.U. students, the occasional skinhead—a typical East Village bar. Live music nightly.

The Cooler, 416 W. 14th St. (229-0785)—A lavender and stainless-steel vault deep in the heart of the meat district. It's become a cliché to tag any hot combo as the best unsigned band in New York, but in the case of **skeleton key** (Jan. 19) it's true. Led by Staten Island native Erik Sanko, a platinum-blond beanpole whose fretless bass work and froggy singing have earned him gigs with the Lounge Lizards, Gavin Friday, and a host of other downtown savants, this ragged four-piece band (guitar, bass, drums, and sheet metal) has been taking the town by storm since its formation last year. They like to describe their corrosive music as Tom Waits meets Nirvana, but XTC meets Béla Bartók is more like it. Either way, this may be your last chance to see them in a small club: the lads are about to engage in some heavy sign-on-the-dotted-line activity. With Vitapup.

Don Hill's, 511 Greenwich St. (219-2850)—A tidy little SoHo bar with an above-average P.A. system and topnotch local bands on the docket. Friday night is SqueezeBox, a vinyl-and-velvet gay glamfest, hosted by Mistress Formika.

Duplex, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. (255-5438)—Everyone is a star here—the pianist, the bartender, the waiters, and the audience. The fabulous **dressing room divas** entertain every Saturday night.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Jan. 17: Up-and-coming singer-songwriter **jane kelly williams.** Dining.

Flannery's, 205 W. 14th St. (929-9589)—A well-scrubbed, amiable Irish pub with many of the classic features (pints of Guinness, non-stop TV sports) and a few of the near-classics (a CD jukebox, a portrait of Elvis).

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—This sprawling two-floor establishment has been all things to all people: meeting hall, rock club, jazz club, Off Broadway theatre. . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday. The dancers share a passion for the Lindy Hop, a dance that involves a lot of whirling and the occasional display of underwear. Sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

Limelight, Sixth Ave. at 20th St. (807-7850)—The rock-and-roll church. Wednesday night is Disco 2000, a fin-de-siècle blowout.

Ludlow Street Café, 165 Ludlow St. (353-0536)—A modest belowstairs room that looks like a spruced-up tenement apartment. Mondays belong to **beat rodeo,** a straight-shooting bar band that plays a mixture of country, blues, Dylan, Byrds, Velvets, and various pop curiosities.

Manny's Car Wash, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—The Upper East Side blues. Jan. 18: **billy boy arnold.** This journeyman harmonica player began his career in the early fifties performing for change on Chicago street corners with his pal Bo Diddley. He helped create Diddley classics like "Pretty Thing" and "Bring It to Jerome," and forty years later this Windy City mainstay can still bring it on home.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (1-201 798-4064)—Jan. 18: **ben folds five** swings over from Brownies.

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Jan. 17: **br5-49,** a high-power hepcat quintet from Nashville which mixes frenetic covers of rockabilly and country-and-Western classics with its own time-warping originals. Jan. 18: Raunchy country punk with **go to blazes.** Jan. 19: The **morning glories.**

Nell's, 246 W. 14th St. (675-1567)—A Victorian-style club, home to an eclectic crowd of downtown youngsters dancing to funk, techno-pop, and, sometimes, jazz. Monday night is Funky Buddha, with live bands and a celebrity d.j. "on the wheels."

Paddy Reilly's Music Bar, 519 Second Ave., at 29th St. (686-1210)—**black 47** usually plays on Saturdays, and Speir Mor (Gaelic for Big Sky) performs for a hearty following on Fridays. Sèisiún—a traditional Irish jam—is on Thursday nights.

Les Poulets, 16 W. 22nd St. (229-2000)—The name may be French, but the music here is Latin: expect salsa, merengue, and the occasional cha-cha. Dining.

Rodeo Bar, 375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—The walls simulate a log cabin, smoke blows through the nostrils of a buffalo head, a horse trailer has been converted into a bar, and you get peanuts for eating and, sometimes, throwing.

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut with a fruit-and-bamboo motif, dedicated to calypso, reggae, and the bossa nova. Dining.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—This spacious and agreeable club offers a consistent lineup of rock and blues greats. Jan. 20: Peter Salett.

Webster Hall, 125 E. 11th St. (353-1600)—A byzantine disco wonderland with four floors, a coffee shop, and a wig boutique. Wednesday is drag night. Psychedelic Thursdays feature grunge acts and cheap beer.

Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Local funk combo MILO Z lights up this vast environmentally friendly club on Jan. 19.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Vocalist PHILLIP OFFICER is currently in the midst of an extended run. Dining.

Arthur's Tavern, 57 Grove St. (675-6879)—Mondays belong to the Grove Street Stompers, Tuesdays through Thursdays to Al Bundy and Johnny Parker, Fridays and Saturdays to the Freddy Francis trio, and Sundays to Lee Lorenz and the Creole Cookin' Jazz Band.

Birdland, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—Jan. 19: Rising Sun. Dining.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Jan. 22: A double bill featuring two of jazz's sharpest young guns, CHRISTIAN MC BRIDE (who performs with a quartet) and CYRUS CHESTNUT (who takes the stage with his trusty trio). McBride is one of the most assured bassists of his generation, a twenty-three-year-old marvel. He can astonish as a sideman; in his new role as bandleader, his potential is unlimited. During Chestnut's apprentice days with Betty Carter, it was obvious that his eminently smart and funky piano work portended something special. Now, he's found a real voice, a blend of profound technique and playful eccentricity. He has the mischievous presence of an elf, but make no mistake: this pianist is a monster.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—A duskily lit neighborhood bar, where pianists, bassists, and, occasionally, drummers compete for your ear. Truth and beauty usually prevail. Through Jan. 20: piano and bass with LARRY WILLIS and RUFUS REID. Dining.

Cajun, 129 Eighth Ave., at 16th St. (691-6174)—A New Orleans-style restaurant specializing in Dixieland and swing. On Fridays, catch the Canal Street Dixieland Jazz and Blues band. Saturdays belong to the New Atlantic Jazz band.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through February, the legendary EARTHA KITT. She is still a fierce and funny performer with a feral grip on her audience. At the end of a song she'll throw back her head and laugh, like some kind of carnivore after the kill; she chooses her victims from the front row, and when the show is over there's blood on the tables. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, PETER MINTUN is in attendance.

Cornelia Street Café, 29 Cornelia St. (989-9319)—Jan. 17: The Neal Kirkwood quartet. Dining.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—No wonder DAVE DOUGLAS (Jan. 20) is the downtown trumpeter of choice: he's got an eclectic imagination, but his real gift is old-fashioned polish. This conservative bent makes for a sparkling sound and for solid compositional resources. The MINGUS BIG BAND still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

Fifty Seven Fifty Seven, 57 E. 57th St. (758-5757)—A sleek piano-and-bass room in the Four Seasons Hotel. Dining.

Five Spot, 4 W. 31st St. (631-0100)—Jan. 18: The VALERIE CAPERS quartet. Jan. 23: The BENNY WATERS quartet. Still going strong in his nineties, this saxophonist got his education in the big bands of yore. His warmth takes you back to a time when a musician's tone was as important as what he played—his robust sound and gracefully measured melodies are as classic as swing itself. Dining.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Across the street from Lincoln Center, this restaurant and club features a handsome bar upstairs and a surreal performance space downstairs. Through Jan. 21: the ANDREW HILL trio and the T. S. MONK sextet. Though Hill's music is dark, elusive, unsettling, and utterly beautiful, his artistic peak was in the sixties, the only decade that could tolerate such an oblique harmonic stance, jerky mid-tempo melodies, and dirgelike ballads (his trademark). But it wasn't free jazz and it wasn't hard bop—it was a private music that never really fit in any time. Whatever it was, you can now find it gloriously chronicled on "The Complete Andrew Hill Blue Note Sessions," which has just been released on Mosaic Records. If the pianist and composer has mellowed over the years, there's still enough of the individualist in him to remind you of the good (and weird) old days. The now-you-see-him-now-you-don't Hill has played the outsider for so long that exposure to the spotlight may have dizzying effects. / One of the tastiest pleasures to emerge in recent years has been T. S. Monk's self-contained small group, dedicated to overlooked classics of the hard-bop repertory as well as to more recent compositions in that tradition. The HARRY (SWEETS) EDISON quintet begins a weeklong run on Jan. 23. Edison, the great Basie veteran, is as concise as his old boss was, playing one piquant note to any other trumpeter's ten. His nonchalant minimalism, nudging tonal inflections, and behind-the-beat feel are so singular that they border on the radical. Dining.

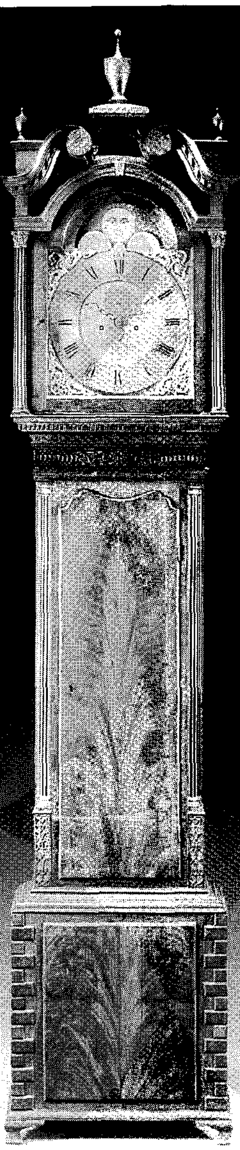
Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—An Old New York kind of place, with dark wood panelling, white tablecloths, and brass figurine lamps.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Guitarist WOLFGANG MUTHSPIEL, in on Jan. 23, is Germany's answer to John Scofield, and for this gig he'll be backed by two celebrated veterans (albeit twenty-five years apart) of Bill Evans' trio, drummer Paul Motian and bassist Marc Johnson.

Match, 160 Mercer St. (343-0020)—This hip SoHo *boîte* is the place to be every Monday night, thanks to the SHORTY JACKSON LEGACY BLUES BAND. Dining.

Michael's Pub, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—On Mondays, Woody Allen continues his night job as clarinet player in the NEW ORLEANS FUNERAL AND RAGTIME ORCHESTRA, a Dixieland-jazz ensemble. Closed Sundays.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—This plush night club, sixty-five floors above it all, complete with Art Deco fixtures, intimate glitter, and a panoramic view as dizzying as the tab, is generally the home of torch singers and cabaret divas, but through early February, the joint has been given over to the three-headed team of MERRY CLAYTON, MARIANNE FAITHFULL, and DARLENE LOVE. Clayton is best remembered as the scary soprano on the Stones' "Gimme Shelter." Faithfull (who also had a thing or two to do with the Stones) still has a voice that's a knowing mix of honey, steel, and gravel. Sixties chanteuse Love (her credits include



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CHRISTIE'S

work with everyone from Phil Spector to Frank Sinatra) is fresh from "Portrait of a Singer," her long-running revue at the Bottom Line. Together, they promise to bring a little sixties spirit to the sixty-fifth floor. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor, plus swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Sean Mahony and Claudette Sierra. Closed Mondays.

Red Blazer Too, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—Thursdays belong to Stan Rubin's big band, Fridays to Sam Ulano and the Bourbon Street Swingers, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and his Stompers.

Smalls, 183 W. 10th St. (929-7565)—This aptly named club features up-and-coming players jamming late into the night.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—A convivial and crowded jazz club where the musicians are always top-shelf. Through Jan. 21: the **MARC COPLAND** quintet, featuring **RANDY BRECKER.** Pianist Copland is a switch hitter—straight-ahead jazzman one day, fusioneer the next. No matter which direction his band takes, you can expect it to move at full throttle. The **LARRY GOLDINGS** trio swings by on Jan. 23. No one is going to confuse Goldings with Jimmy Smith, or even Baby Face Willette, for that matter, but he has enough funk in his fingers to convince you that the electric organ is still a relevant instrument. Dining.

Tavern on the Green, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—Through Jan. 21: the **GATO BARBIERI** quartet. The Argentinian tenor saxophonist with the sensuous tone and the résumé that includes everything from avant-garde work in the sixties to composing the score for "Last Tango in Paris" hasn't recorded in over a decade (a new release is imminent), but that hasn't slowed down club appearances or his faithful following. Dining.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Jan. 21: the **BARRY HARRIS** trio. While most bop pianists attack the keys with the intensity of Secretariat on a good day, Harris seduces them with his easy touch, always placing melody before chops. The **KENNY BARRON** trio takes over this landmark room on Jan. 23. Barron may have succeeded too well as the pianist of choice—ubiquity goes hand in hand with being taken for granted. Whatever the drawbacks of popularity and consistency, though, he turns every set into a lesson in unmannered, eloquent improvisation. He may be the most sympathetic accompanist around, but under the spotlight he's a star. With the great **RON CARTER** on bass. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

Visiones, 125 Macdougal St., at W. 3rd St. (673-5576)—Jan. 17-20: The **RENEE ROSNES** quartet.

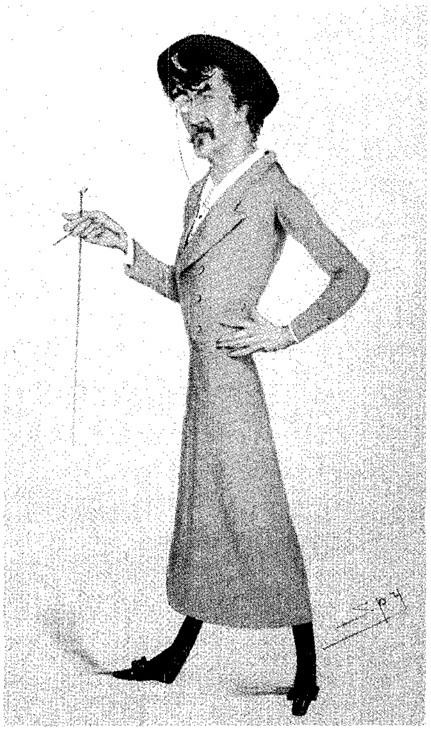
Zinc Bar, 90 W. Houston St. (477-8337)—An invasion of underrated bop-era guitarmen begins on Jan. 17 with the dexterous **SAL SALVADOR** and continues on Jan. 18 with **JOE PUMA,** who is still fondly remembered for his telepathic seventies duets with Chuck Wayne. Sundays feature Brazilian jazz.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—A rarity among jazz clubs: somewhere you'd go to eat even if there were no music. Through Jan. 20: duelling guitar masters **GENE BERTONCINI** and **BUCKY PIZZARELLI.** The pairing of Bertoncini and Pizzarelli is God's gift to local guitarists—a master class in lyricism and musicianship. Bertoncini makes use of an acoustic instrument, draws on classical and bossa-nova themes, and speaks in confidential tones. He reveres melody and the graceful cobwebs that a well-chosen chord can create. Everything Pizzarelli has done—from his duos with Zoot Sims to his work with Benny Goodman and Benny Carter to his solo performances at various clubs around town—has been easy and swinging and attractive. He's a mellifluous player whose roots go back to Charlie Christian and Django Reinhardt and whose tone is extraordinarily rich and pleasant. He doesn't twang, he doesn't roar, he doesn't whine: he is the platonic ideal of the electric guitarist.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Haute Couture." Detail and tailoring are the focus in the Costume Institute's examination of high fashion since 1870, from Worth to Lacroix. Through March 24. . . . ¶ "Howard Hodgkin: Paintings 1975-1995." Luxuriantly decorative abstract paintings whose exuberant patterns and electric colors bring to mind the florid arabesques favored by such Bloomsbury lights as Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, and Dora Carrington; well installed and ravishingly lit, they seem to glow with an inner fire. Through Jan. 28. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)



Whistler, caricatured by Spy (Leslie Ward), in "The Butterfly and the Bat," at the Frick Collection.

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—"Piet Mondrian: 1872-1944," a hundred and sixty paintings and drawings and a re-creation of the artist's last studio. Through Jan. 30. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"Claes Oldenburg: An Anthology." Curator Germano Celant's selection of Oldenburg's work goes a long way toward recalling the radicalism of the Pop progenitor's immensely influential performances, installations, and soft sculptures. Wisely emphasizing the artist's work through the early seventies, Celant soft-pedals the "humorous" large-scale public commissions that have been the heart of his activity since. The museum has also managed a coup: an enormous soft shuttlecock has been created especially for this exhibition; installed on one of the upper tiers, its white tendrils spill over the railing like the unruly hair of an abstract Medusa. Through Jan. 21. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway—"The Material Imagination" features eighteen sculptures and conceptual works by such artists as Martin Puryear, Louise Bourgeois, Richard Long, Lawrence Weiner, and Kiki Smith. Through Jan. 27. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—"Moving Out," a survey of Robert Frank's career, overflows with assertions of the photographer's visual poetry, with wall texts and catalogue essays supplying quotations from Frank about vision and song and hope and despair. It's curious, then, that the show underplays "The Americans" (1958), his chief poetic composition; fewer than forty selections are on view—plainly, even pallidly, installed. But the rest of the work comes out from under the shadow of "The Americans." Frank's early pictures are concise, with deep gray and black tones and a few telling silver highlights. His later autobiographical works, composed of several images with painted or scratched-in words, are steeped in ideas about memory and change; they move from painful elegies to brisk, clear-eyed, even happy, odes to being alive. Through Feb. 11. . . . ¶ "Beat Culture and the New America: 1950-1965," a loving, ambitious tribute to the angry young men of the era which nevertheless doesn't really solve the perennial problem of literature-based exhibitions: books in glass cases have little to say to people who haven't read them. Yet there are lively paintings—doodles, really—by Kerouac and Burroughs and a family-snapshot album of the movement by Ginsberg. Anyone who was a teen-ager during those years will feel the numinous pull of the manuscript of "Howl" and of the Teletype-paper roll on which Kerouac typed "On the Road." Through Feb. 4. . . . ¶ Several box constructions and collages by Joseph Cornell. Through March 10. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—Aerial photographs of pre-Columbian ruins and other sites in Peru, by Marilyn Bridges. Through Feb. 1. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—"A Slice of Schiaparelli: Surrealism in Fashion." Fifty examples of the stylish inspirations of Elsa Schiaparelli (1890-1973): evening gloves with reptilian scales; a day suit with metallic ladybugs, grasshoppers, and cockroaches creeping across it; a hat of celluloid grapes; and more. Through March 24. . . . ¶ Human figures rise out of root and boulder shapes in Alison Saar's sculptures "Tree Souls" and "Stone Souls." (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St.—Contemporary wooden, metal, ceramic, and glass vessels from the White House collection of American crafts are currently in residence. Through Feb. 25. . . . ¶ "Craft in the Machine Age, 1920-1945," a host of objects—furniture, textiles, vases, turned bowls, cocktail shakers, crystal—whose creation was influenced by modernist aspects of Scandinavian, French, and Bauhaus design. Through Feb. 25. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 8; Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Butler Library, Columbia University, Broadway at 114th St.—"'The Tall Swift Shadow of a Ship at Night': Stephen and Cora Crane." The lives and careers of the naturalist writer and his common-law wife are documented in a large selection of books, letters, manuscripts, and photographs. Through Feb. 16. (Open Mondays, noon to 7:45; Tuesdays through Fridays, 9 to 4:45.)

Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St.—Gerhard Richter's "Atlas," more than six hundred large panels mounted with thousands of photographs. For upward of thirty years, the German painter has been amassing both archival material (including images of Hitler and of concentration-camp survivors, as well as postcards and pornography) and his own snapshots as sources for his art. For nearly as long he's been organizing these thousands of pictures on panels. Richter has always toyed with the interplay between photography and painting;

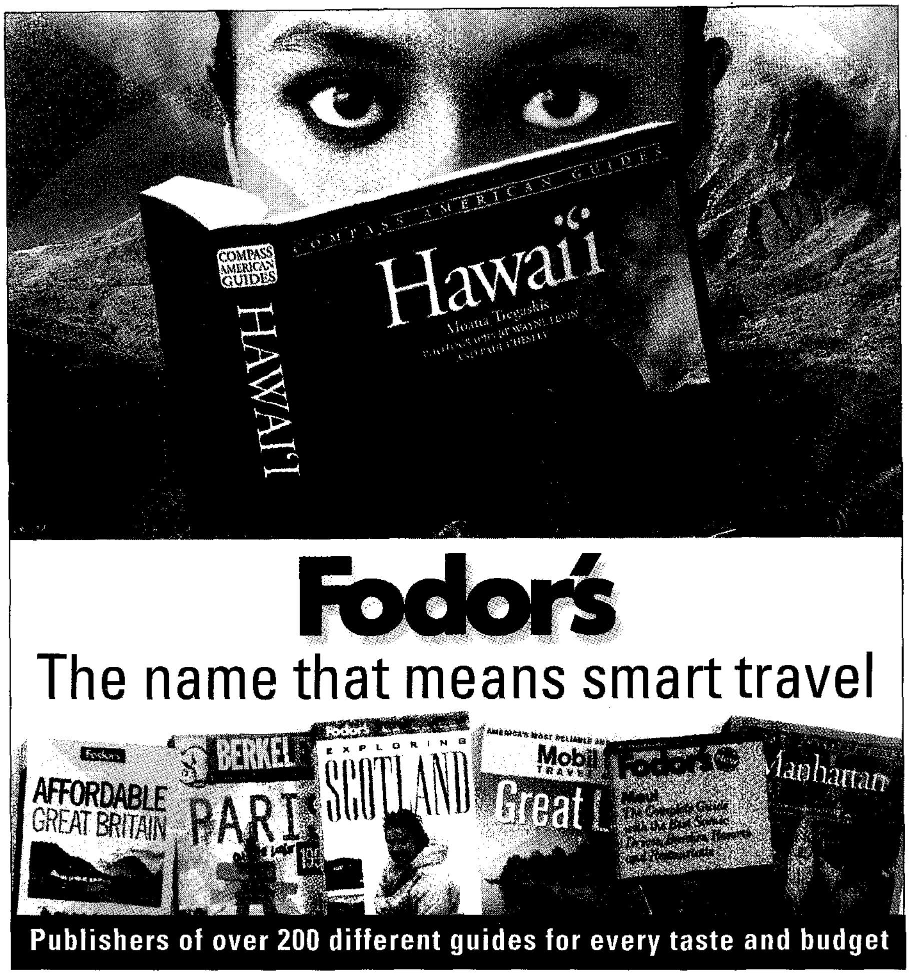
this strange, obsessive, ongoing art project provides valuable insights into the methods and themes of one of the most influential and enigmatic artists of the postwar era. Through Feb. 29. . . . ¶ "European Couples, and Others," a selection of the minimalist sculptor Dan Flavin's work from 1964 to 1978, all drawn from Dia's own collection. The fluorescent-light sculptures appear to extraordinary advantage in Dia's antiseptic space. Most of them inhabit corners after the manner of Russian avant-garde works by the likes of Malevich and Tatlin; their glow dematerializes the plain geometry of the architecture, rendering their surroundings sensuous and atmospheric. . . . ¶ "Your Skin in This Weather Bourne Eye-Threads & Swollen Perfume" is the laboriously poetic title of Jessica Stockholder's rambling, ramshackle installation, which utilizes (among *many* other things) hot-pink carpet, lime-green linoleum, purple milk crates, and a tumescent heap of stuffed shirts. (Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION, 1 E. 70th St.—"The Butterfly and the Bat." James McNeill Whistler's exquisite portrait of the aristocratic ne'er-do-well Comte Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac is one of the Frick's most famous holdings. This exhibition, devoted to their friendship, turns up a trunkload of treasures: some very amusing caricatures by Max Beerbohm and others; a brilliantly colored abstraction by Gustave Moreau (loaned by the Musée Gustave Moreau, in Paris) that predates Kandinsky's first abstract paintings by at least four years; an indecipherable sketch of Montesquiou by Marcel Proust, which has never been exhibited before. The painter and the dandy were icons of camp long before Susan Sontag codified the term; among the oddments on display here are Whistler's calling-card case, covered with daintily embossed butterflies, and a copy of the count's chinchilla cape, by Revillon. Through Jan. 28. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

JEWISH MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.—"Russian Jewish Artists in a Century of Change, 1890-1990," a large exhibition of paintings, sculptures, photographs, and graphic works by fifty artists, including Eric Bulatov, Léon Bakst, Marc Chagall, Ilya Kabakov, El Lissitzky, and Komar & Melamid. Through Jan. 28. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—After a visit to "Haute Couture" at the Met, stop by "Uncommon Threads: Three Hundred Years of New York Style," a display of seventy-five complete ensembles. In addition to ball gowns and Broadway costumes, there are several pieces with a distinctly democratic air: a "Rosie the Riveter" jumpsuit; a "man's day ensemble," circa 1970 (brushed-denim elephant bell-bottoms with a body-tattoo T-shirt); and the chocolate-brown uniform of James Jarrett, Jr., who served as the doorman at Henri Bendel for more than seventy years. Through Feb. 11. . . . ¶ "Growing Up in New York: The Photography of Arthur Leipzig." Black-and-white pictures, from the forties through the sixties, of children's games, East River diving, sit-ins, opening night at the opera, and more. Through March 31. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—"Edvard Munch and Harald Sohlberg: Landscapes of the Mind," a conspectus of the work of two turn-of-the-century Norwegian painters. Munch is represented by many of his finest canvases, including the mesmerizing "Madonna," and "Vampire," a lamplit scene of a couple kissing which virtually tingles with horror. "The Scream" is here, too, in lithograph form. Sohlberg's vision was more uplifting than harrowing; he specialized in mountain landscapes at dusk (when the arctic horizon was ablaze) and afterward. Through Jan. 21. (Open Tuesdays through



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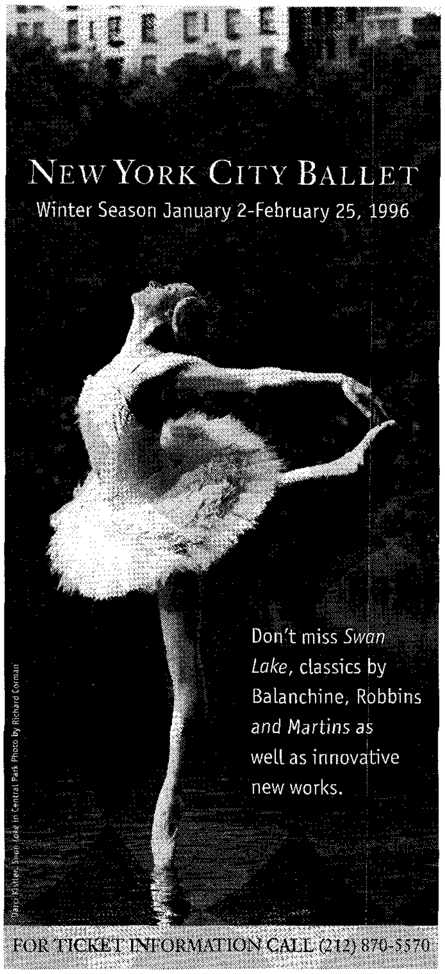
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NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W.—Forty maps of New York City and State, from the society's vast collection of Western Hemisphere cartography. Through Jan. 21. . . . ¶ "Clement Clarke Moore of Chelsea and 'A Visit from St. Nicholas.'" The handwritten original, from 1822, is on display along with various illustrated editions and other materials relating to the author and his environs. Through Feb. 4. . . . ¶ An exhibition of posters and photographs from the Second World War. Through Feb. 11. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5, and Wednesday evenings until 8.)

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—"Flights of Fancy," thirteen drawings by Charles Addams, most of which appeared in these pages. . . . ¶ Part two of "The Collecting Adventure, 1895-1995" examines the way the library has preserved sacred texts, original manuscripts, and early printed books. Through Feb. 3. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

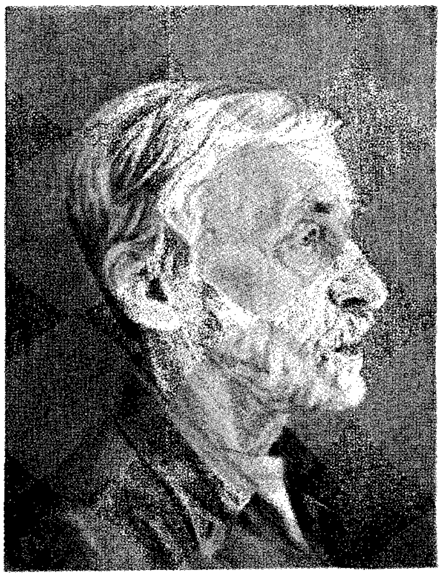
GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

ANDRÉ MASSON (1896-1987)—Twenty-six Surrealist paintings from 1941 to 1945, the years when the Parisian artist was a war exile in New Preston, Connecticut. Through March 2. (Zabriskie, in its new location, at 41 E. 57th St.)

ALICE NEEL (1900-84)—The painter's overweening preference was for pitilessly honest portraiture. Several of her pregnant nude figures are on view here. Through Feb. 3. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St.)

E. AMBROSE WEBSTER (1869-1935) American Impressionist paintings of rocky Azores seascapes and of New England in winter. The compositions are closely patterned on Monet, but the palette is unlike anything in French painting: not reds and blues but shrieking cerise, magenta, and puce. Through Jan. 20. (Babcock, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)


A retrospective of Rudy Burckhardt's photographs, at De Nagy.

"STARTING WITH FLOWERS"—Painted blossoms in various contexts, from Janet Fish, Robert Kushner, Whitfield Lovell, Lucio Pozzi, and Jimmy Wright. Through Feb. 10. (DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.)

"EXPLORING THE UNKNOWN"—The title of this well-chosen survey of American Surrealism refers as much to the artists as to their murky Freudian subject matter. Some big names are deployed—there's a marvellous Cornell box and manifestly Miró-inspired watercolors by Rothko and Pollock—but the real interest is in the competent hacks who put an American spin on a European idiom. "Eclipse," by Charles Rain (1911-85), is delightfully dated: classical statues and a spooky iron gate tilt in a swirling mist, looking like a Hollywood dream sequence. A small room is devoted to the Tanguyesque visions of Boris Margo (1902-95). Through Jan. 27. (Rosenfeld, 24 W. 57th St.)

"FILM POSTERS OF THE RUSSIAN AVANT-GARDE"—Rodchenko's poster for "Potemkin" is the jewel of this lot, which also includes work by Vladimir and Georgi Stenberg, Nikolai Prusakov, Grigory Borisov, and Anatoly Belskii. Through Jan. 20. (Ubu, 16 E. 78th St.)

GROUP SHOW—Small-scale paintings, drawings, sculptures, and photographs by a large group of artists, including Vincent La Scala, James Rosenquist, Deborah Kass, Sandro Chia, Joseph Beuys, Rocky Schenck, and Philip Taaffe. Through Jan. 20. (Baumgold, 128 E. 72nd St.)

SHORT LIST—**JOSEF ALBERS,** Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. Through Feb. 17. . . . **STANLEY BOXER,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. Open Mondays; through Feb. 3. . . . **LINDEN FREDERICK,** Tatistcheff, 50 W. 57th St. Through Jan. 27. . . . **BRUCE HELANDER,** Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St. Through Jan. 20. . . . **HANS HOFMANN,** Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. Through Jan. 20. . . . **LEE KRASNER,** McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. Open Mondays; through Jan. 27. . . . **LOREN MADSEN,** McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Through Feb. 10. . . . **RICHARD POUSETTE-DART,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. Through Feb. 3. . . . **CHRISTOPHER WILMARTH,** Hirschl & Adler Modern, 21 E. 70th St. Through Feb. 10.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

FRANCESCO CLEMENTE—A selection of oil paintings and works on paper from the eighties, by the leading Italian exponent of neo-expressionism. The images are unfailingly lovely, regardless of their outré subject matter (polymorphous sexuality, decapitation, vomiting, etc.). Through Jan. 27. (Blum, 99 Wooster St.)

SHORT LIST—**ALICE AYCOCK,** Weber, 142 Greene St. Through Feb. 3. . . . **LUTZ BACHER,** Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6; through Jan. 28. . . . **JANE DICKSON,** Black+Herron, 79 Grand St. Through Jan. 27. . . . **HANS-PETER FELDMANN,** 303 Gallery, 89 Greene St. Through Feb. 3. . . . **LUCIO FONTANA,** Gladstone, 99 Greene St. Through Feb. 3. . . . **ELLEN GALLAGHER,** Boone, 417 West Broadway. Through Feb. 24. . . . **STEPHEN GREENE,** Beitzel, 102 Prince St. Through Feb. 10. . . . **GEORGE HERMS,** Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St. Through Jan. 27. . . . **MICAH LEXIER,** Shainman, 560 Broadway. Through Feb. 3. . . . **JAMES NARES,** Kasmin, 74 Grand St. Through Feb. 3. . . . **ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG,** Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway. Through Feb. 17. . . . **DAVID ROSE** and **JOHN DOHERTY,** Meisel, 141 Prince St. Through Jan. 27.

OTHER VENUES

"SERENISSIMA: THE ARTS OF FASHION IN VENICE"—This costume exhibit, one of the most spectacular in years, repays a long and attentive wander. Most of the garments date from the eighteenth century: fabulous Watteau-esque gowns and brocade waistcoats; ten-inch wooden platform shoes (two hundred years before the Bee Gees), inlaid with mother-of-pearl, for slogging through flooded piazzas; adorable children's slippers covered in petit point. The fans and reticules are little masterpieces—those Venetians knew how to accessorize. Period paintings illustrating various crafts and industries enliven the gallery walls. Though the show is a model of scholarship, the installation itself is strangely shabby, with the unfinished air of a construction-site hut. Through Jan. 20. (Equitable, Seventh Ave. at 52nd St. Open Mondays; opens at noon on Saturdays.)

DUNCAN HANNAH

"Art, Design, and Barbie: The Evolution of a Cultural Icon"—The überdoll gets a valise's worth of makeovers here, from the likes of John Baldessari, Zaha Hadid, Kenny Scharf, Robert A. M. Stern, and Andy Warhol. Through Feb. 10. (Liberty Street Gallery, 225 Liberty St., at West St., Battery Park City. Opens Saturdays and Sundays at noon. For more information, call 945-0505.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Sotheby's—An auction of the Adolph and Ginger Meyer Collection of Americana includes many masterpiece-level specimens of American furniture—seventeenth-century, Queen Anne, Chippendale, Federal, and folk. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000. Jan. 20.)

Christie's—From 1836 until the turn of the century, American inventors could receive an "enablement"—a sort of temporary production monopoly—from the U.S. Patent Office by submitting an application package that included a model of their creation scaled to take up no more than a square foot of shelf space. Christie's will auction two hundred of these artifacts, including such curiosities as Edison's models for a light-bulb-filament carbonizer and an automatic telegraph, early steam cookers and coffeemakers, and a "rotating blast-producing chair," devised in 1858, in which a sitter could power a pair of bellows by pedalling to create a cooling breeze. (Christie's East, 219 E. 67th St. Jan. 23.)

Winter Antiques Show—The forty-second annual installment of this high-end show brings together sixty-nine international dealers. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. Jan. 19-28. For information, call 1-718 292-7392.)

"Antiques at the Other Armory"—A hundred dealers offer fine and decorative art, furniture, textiles, and what have you. (69th Regiment Armory, Lexington Ave. at 25th St. Jan. 19-21. For information, call 255-0020. . . . **NOTE:** A free shuttle bus will link this show with its tonier counterpart uptown.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Rudy Burckhardt—A small retrospective of New York City shots by the eighty-one-year-old photographer and painter. Through Jan. 27. (De Nagy, 41 W. 57th St.)

Gerald Slota—Dark, blurred photographs, most of them containing more than one image (little girls' faces, say, or the shadows of hands which look like guns), with drawings scratched into their surfaces. Enigmatic and disturbing. Through Jan. 20. (Ricco/Maresca, 152 Wooster St.)

International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St.—"Eve Arnold: In Retrospect," black-and-white and color images from the photojournalist's forty-year career: politicians, diplomats, movie stars, religious leaders, artists, and musicians. Through Feb. 11. (Another show of Arnold's work is at Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St., through Feb. 10.) . . . ¶ "Country Beside Itself," Lars Tunbjörk's colorful, idiosyncratic exploration of Sweden's changing commercial and leisure pursuits. Through Feb. 11. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**TOM BARIL** and **ROCKY SCHENCK**, Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. Through Feb. 24. . . . **KEITH CARTER**, Witkin, 415 West Broadway. Through Jan. 20. . . . **HENRI CARTIER-BRESSON** and **TOSHIO SHIBATA**, Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. Through Feb. 24. . . . **JOHN DUGDALE**, Wessel O'Connor, 60 Thomas St. Opens at noon; through Jan. 20. . . . **MICHIKO KON**, Mann, 42 E. 76th St. Through March 2. . . . **ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE**, Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. Through Feb. 3. . . . **GILLES PERESS**, Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. Through Feb. 10. . . . **NEIL WINOKUR**, Borden, 560 Broadway. Through Feb. 11.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, the American Museum of Natural History, Dia Center for the Arts, and the Museum of the City of New York.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall is 247-7800, and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA,** with Ruth Ann Swenson, Raúl Giménez, Mark Oswald, John Del Carlo, and Simone Alaimo; conducted by Adam Fischer. (Jan. 17 and Jan. 20 at 8 and Jan. 23 at 7:30.) . . . **DON GIOVANNI,** with Jane Eaglen, Patricia Schuman, Ms. Swenson, Stanford Olsen, Christopher Robertson, and John Cheek; James Levine. (Jan. 18 at 8.) . . . **TURANDOT,** with Ghena Dimitrova, Veronica Villarroel, Michael Sylvester, and Dimitri Kavrakos; Nello Santi. (Jan. 19 at 8.) . . . **THE MAKROPULOS CASE,** by Janáček, with Jessye Norman, Graham Clark, Håkan Hagegård, and Donald McIntyre; David Robertson. In English. (Jan. 20 at 1:30.) . . . **FALSTAFF,** with Barbara Daniels, Barbara Bonney, Marilyn Horne, Paul Groves, Paul Plishka, and Gino Quilico; Mr. Levine. (Jan. 22 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

"L'Incoronazione di Poppea"—Final performances of Monteverdi's final opera, featuring soprano Dana Hanchard and countertenors Drew Minter and David Daniels. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. Jan. 17 and Jan. 19 at 8 and Jan. 21 at 3.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—Kurt Masur conducts Bach's B-Minor Mass, with soprano Edith Wiens, mezzo-soprano Janis Taylor, tenor John Aler, baritone William Stone, the New York Choral Artists, and the American Boychoir. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Jan. 18-20 and Jan. 23, all at 8.)

Detroit Symphony—Neeme Järvi leads Veljo Tormis's Overture No. 2, Dvořák's Piano Concerto (with Garrick Ohlsson), and

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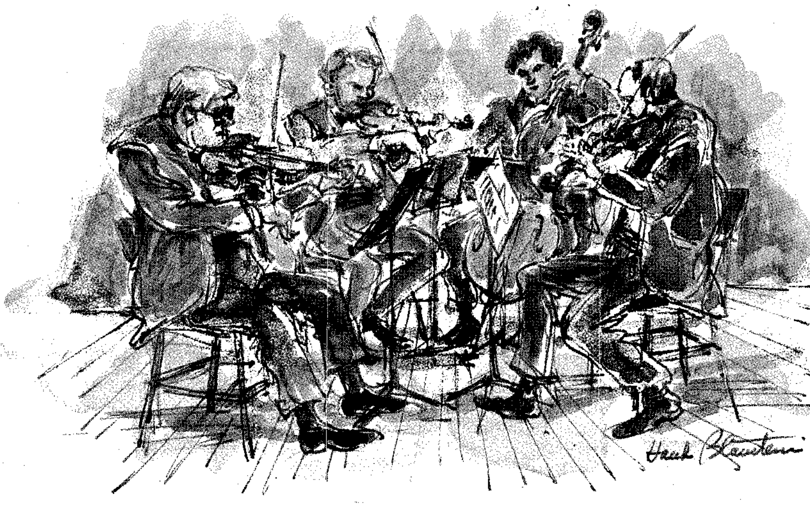
Strauss's Suite from "Schlagobers." (Carnegie Hall. Jan. 18 at 8.)

R. I. P.—Profoundly affected by the death of the poet Alessandro Manzoni, Verdi began composing his Requiem Mass in 1873. It was a striking change of genre for the composer, whose career had been almost exclusively devoted to opera—by that time he had written twenty-six of them. Verdi viewed his mission with a sense of high purpose: he wrote to a friend that he was "no longer a clown serving the audience, beating a huge drum and shouting 'Come on! Come on! Step up!' " Robert Shaw directs this most dramatic of all requiems (the conductor Hans von Bülow called it an "opera in church vestments") in a performance featuring the Robert Shaw Festival Chorus and Choral Institute Singers, the Orchestra of St. Luke's, and soloists Carol Vaness (soprano), Florence Quivar (mezzo-soprano), Jerry Hadley (tenor), and Alastair Miles (bass). Rounding out the program will be two of Verdi's "Quattro Pezzi Sacri," written in the ensuing decades: the "Ave Maria" (for a-cappella chorus), which uses an experimental, chromatically altered scale that the composer called a *scala enigmatica*; and the "Stabat Mater" (for chorus and orchestra), the composer's ultimate composition, completed in late 1897. (Carnegie Hall. Jan. 21 at 3.)



The Juilliard String Quartet, at the Metropolitan Museum.

HANK BLAUSTIEN

RECITALS

Bargemusic—String sextets (for the rich-toned combination of two violins, two violas, and two cellos) occupy a revered niche in the chamber-music repertoire. Boccherini, Spohr, Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, Reger, and Martinů all wrote string sextets that deserve more frequent airing, even if they don't reach the heights of Dvořák's or Schoenberg's or the two sextets on this program: Brahms's Second (in G Major) and Tchaikovsky's "Souvenir de Florence." The roster of performers comprises violinists Christiaan Bor and Nai-Yuan Hu, violists Gilad Karni and Paul Neubauer, and cellists Andrés Díaz and Timothy Eddy. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Jan. 18 at 7:30 and Jan. 21 at 4.)

Ear Openers—This week, three venues challenge listeners to broaden their conceptions of what qualifies as a musical instrument. At the Kitchen: "Insects & Anxious Objects," a performance piece exploring the interaction of objects, sounds, and projected images, uses hybrid string instruments created by Ken Butler from such found objects as axes, bicycle wheels, and paint brushes. (512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Jan. 18-20 at 8.) . . . ¶ At Lotus Fine Arts Center: "Warmer by the Stove," an avant-garde improvisation festival curated by Thomas Buckner and Tom Hamilton, opens on Jan. 19 with an intermedia event by Tom Varner based on subway experiences, and continues on Jan. 20 with an electro-acoustic environment by Ben Manley which includes the amplified sounds of light-bulb filaments. (109 W. 27th St. 627-1076. Evenings at 8. The festival continues through Jan. 27.) . . . ¶ At Bruno Walter Auditorium: Skip La Plante performs on instruments he built out of discarded objects—juice jars, broiler pans, refrigerator drawers, and so on. This concert complements "Metal Earth Wood Styrofoam=Music," an exhibit of imaginative instruments by Mr. La Plante, composer and inventor Harry Partch, and potter Ragnar Naess, which will be on view at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts through May 4. (Lincoln Center. Jan. 22 at 6:30. No tickets necessary.)

Evgeny Kissin—The pianist, now twenty-four and deepening his interpretative insights with each passing year, performs the Bach/Busoni D-Minor Chaconne, Mozart's A-Major Sonata (K. 311), and Schumann's "Kreisleriana" and Toccata (Op. 7). (Carnegie Hall. Jan. 19 at 8.)

Juilliard String Quartet—The foursome continues its fiftieth-anniversary celebration with Beethoven's Quartets in A Major (Op. 18, No. 5), F Major (Op. 59, No. 1), and C-Sharp Minor (Op. 131). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Jan. 19 at 8.)

"Focus! 1996"—In this year's festival, students of the Juilliard School explore the contemporary music of twelve Pacific Rim countries. Jan. 19 at 8: The New Juilliard Ensemble offers Lou Harrison's Piano Concerto, among other works. (Alice Tully Hall.) . . . ¶ Jan. 22-23 at 8: Two different programs of solo and chamber works from Australia, Canada, China, El Salvador, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United States. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. For information about free tickets, which are required for all performances, call 769-7406. The festival continues through Jan. 26.)

Janos Starker—The eminent cellist performs Bach's C-Major Unaccompanied Suite, in an hour-long concert with commentary. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Jan. 20 at 7.)

Joan Morris and William Bolcom—The mezzo-soprano and the pianist offer classic American popular songs, from turn-of-the-century hits to modern cabaret pieces. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Jan. 20 at 8.)

Piffaro—The seven-member Renaissance wind band performs music from sixteenth-century Italy. Presented by Music Before 1800. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 666-9266. Jan. 21 at 4.)

Fine Arts Quartet—The ensemble plays quartets by Juan Crisóstomo Arriaga (his First), Shostakovich (his Eleventh), and Dvořák (his Fourteenth). (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Jan. 21 at 5.)

Kurt Ollmann—Baritone, in a wide-ranging recital that includes songs by Mozart, Brahms, and Roussel; with pianist Donald St. Pierre. (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. Jan. 22 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.)

New Music Consort—Sticks and mallets set wood, metal, and skins resonating in a percussion program that comprises traditional African drumming, revolutionary classics by Frank Zappa and John Cage, and premières of works by David Shohl and David Glaser. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd Street. 749-2802, ext. 428. Jan. 22 at 8.)

Odd Lots—Boris Berman, Claude Frank, and Peter Frankl perform music by ten composers, from Bach to Schnittke, written for combinations of one, two, three, four, five, and six hands at one piano. (Weill Recital Hall. Jan. 23 at 8.)

ALSO OF INTEREST

NEW YORK VIRTUOSI CHAMBER SYMPHONY: Members of the orchestra play chamber works by Brahms, Poulenc, and others. (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 17 at 8.) The full ensemble offers Haydn's Symphony No. 49 and Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 2, with Rieko Aizawa, among other works. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. Jan. 21 at 2. For information about tickets, call 586-4680.) . . . **RUSSIAN CHAMBER CHORUS:** Performing music by Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, and others. (All Souls Unitarian Church, Lexington Ave. at 80th St. Jan. 19 at 8. Tickets at the door.) . . . **CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF THE INSTITUTE:** Piano quartets by Fauré (in C Minor) and Schumann, among other works. (Ukrainian Institute, 2 E. 79th St. 772-2884. Jan. 20 at 8.) . . . **GREGG SMITH SINGERS:** In a program that includes excerpts from Monteverdi's Vespers of 1610 and many twentieth-century pieces. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Jan. 20 at 8. For information about tickets, call 874-2990.) . . . **AURÉOLE:** A flute, viola, and harp trio. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. 229-5689. Jan. 21 at 2.) . . . **ELECTRIC DIAMOND:** Classical and ethnic music in electro-acoustic arrangements. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Jan. 21 at 2. Tickets at the door.) . . . **NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC ENSEMBLES:** Members of the orchestra play chamber works by Beethoven, Korngold (his Suite for Piano Left Hand and Strings), and Dvořák (his String Quintet, Op. 97). (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 21 at 3.) . . . **PENDERECKI STRING QUARTET:** With clarinettist James Campbell, performing works by Schubert, Bartók, and Brahms. (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. 734-2130. Jan. 21 at 3.) . . . **MICHAEL PARLOFF:** Flutist, in an all-Bach recital. (Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, Madison Ave. at 73rd St. Jan. 21 at 4. Admission by contribution.) . . . **"GUITAR AMONG OTHERS":** Chamber music with flute, bassoon, and guitar. (St. Luke's in the Fields, 487 Hudson St., at Grove St. Jan. 21 at 4. For information, call 1-718 788-1988.) . . . **IVES STRING QUARTET:** Quartets by Barber and Britten. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Jan. 21 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.) . . . **STUART NEILL:** Tenor, in lieder by Beethoven, Strauss, Liszt, Quilter, and others. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Jan. 21 at 8.) . . . **JUPITER SYMPHONY:** Presenting piano and violin concertos by Mozart. (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. Jan. 22 at 2 and 7 and Jan. 23 at 8. For information, call 799-1259.) . . . **RIVERSIDE SYMPHONY:** In works of Josef Kraus, Dvořák (his Serenade for String Orchestra), and Maurice Wright (his "Concertpiece," featuring marimba player Will Hudgins). (Merkin Concert Hall. Jan. 22 at 8.) . . . **KATHLEEN SUPOVÉ:** Piano music on the cutting edge. (Bloomingdale House, 323 W. 108th St. 663-6021. Jan. 23 at 7.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

How's Your Habitat?—Jan. 17 at 2: Columbia professors assess the home planet and its carrying capacity. Wallace Broecker reports on terrestrial change over the last four and a half billion years, Paul Olsen covers the evolution of every living thing but us, Simon Schama surveys environmental transitions that have resulted from human activities, and Joel Cohen speculates on the number of us that the earth can continue to support. (Low Memorial Library, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Jan. 23 at 6: Duke professor John Terborgh considers the housing crisis facing North American songbirds—scarlet tanagers, indigo buntings, black-throated blue warblers, and others—which currently stand to lose both woodland nesting sites and tropical winter getaways. (Caspary Auditorium, Rockefeller University, 1230 York Ave., at 66th St. For more information, call 1-718 220-6891.)

The City So Nice They Had to Name It Ice—Frozen variations on familiar heartwarmers. **THE WIZARD OF OZ ON ICE:** The Scarecrow, the Tin Man, and the Cowardly Lion will all wail about their peculiar impoverishments and Dorothy will click her red skates together, but what you haven't seen is the pair of snowflakes (Olga Neizvestnaya-Hunter, from Novosibirsk, and Serguei Zaitsev, from Leningrad) that will jitterbug through the poppy field outside Emerald City, in a number that was cut from the 1939 movie. (Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. Jan. 17-26.) . . . ¶ **MONTREAL FASHIONS ON ICE:** Skaters from the Ice Theatre of New York don the winter collections of Québécois couturiers Layette Minimôme, La Mère Michelle, Oggi, and Irving Samuel, among others. (The Rink at Rockefeller Plaza, Fifth Ave. at 50th St. Jan. 22 at 6. For more information, call 397-0200.)

Readings—Jan. 17 at 7: Short-story writer David Means ("A Quick Kiss of Redemption") and novelist Jonathan Franzen ("The Twenty-seventh City") read from their work. (Limbo, 47 Avenue A, at 4th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Jan. 17 at 7:30: City dwellers Darcy Cosper (Hell's Kitchen), Victoria LaBalme (Chelsea), Mo Willems (Williamsburg), and Jenny Lyn Bader (the Upper West Side), among others, read essays about New York. (National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ Jan. 19 at 7:30: Poets Marilyn Hacker and C. D. Wright read from their work. (Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ Jan. 22 at 7:30: Egyptian dissident novelist Nawal El Saadawi ("Memoirs from a Women's Prison") and Columbia law professor Patricia Williams ("The Alchemy of Race and Rights") read from and discuss their work. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 645-5848.)

Talks—Jan. 18 at 6: Harvard professors Felton Earls (child psychiatry) and Mary Carlson (neuroscience) discuss recent studies of the hormonal effects of social deprivation on children. (Caspary Auditorium, Rockefeller University, 1230 York Ave., at 66th St. For more information, call 327-8967.) . . . ¶ Jan. 18 at 6:30: Stanley Kunitz and Tina Rosenberg, the winners of last year's National Book Awards for poetry and nonfiction, respectively, discuss their writing strategies. (Celeste Bartos Forum, New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 576-0031.) . . . ¶ Jan. 20 at 4: In "Kinesthetics and Imagery," the last of four lectures on his teacher Slavko Vorkapich, New York University film professor Benjamin Hayeem screens excerpts from Truffaut, Méliès, Dovzhenko, and Eisenstein, among others, which demonstrate the lasting influence of Vorkapich's montage sequences of the twenties and thirties. (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. For information about tickets, call 875-5600.)

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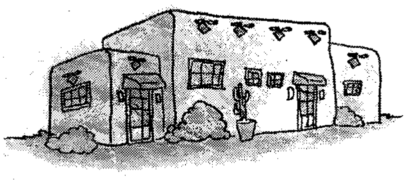


THE MOVIES

FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

Eden Valley—The British collective Amber Films created this drama about a troubled teenager (Darren Bell) sent to live with the father (Brian Hogg) who abandoned him ten years earlier. Opening January 19. (Quad Cinema.)

From Dusk Till Dawn—An action film written by Quentin Tarantino, in which he and George Clooney play a pair of thieves who find themselves in a Mexican saloon full of vampires. With Harvey Keitel and Juliette Lewis. Directed by Robert Rodriguez. Opening January 19. (Embassy 1 and Embassy 2.)

Halfmoon—Three episodes based on short stories by Paul Bowles, who acts as narrator. Written and directed by Frieder Schlaich and Irene von Alberti. In English and Arabic. Opening January 17. (Film Forum.)

Last Summer in the Hamptons—A comedy in which Victoria Foyt plays a movie star who visits a Long Island theatrical family that is in the midst of producing a play. Directed by Henry Jaglom, who co-wrote the screenplay with Foyt. Opening January 17. (Cinema Village, Cinema 3rd Avenue, and Angelika 57.)

Mr. Holland's Opus—Richard Dreyfuss stars in Stephen Herek's drama, as a music teacher who dreams of composing a masterpiece. With Glenne Headly, Olympia Dukakis, and Alicia Witt. Written by Patrick Sheane Duncan. Opening January 19. (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Cinema I, 86th Street East Twin, and Lincoln Square.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Anthony Lane, and Terrence Rafferty. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 26.)

The American President—In Rob Reiner's romantic comedy, the Chief Executive (Michael Douglas) is a widower—a lonely guy in the White House. The script, by Aaron Sorkin, wastes no time setting him up with a nice girl (Annette Bening), who is lobbying him for tougher environmental laws. This dopey premise creates enough crises to keep the lovers from achieving their destined bliss until an hour and fifty minutes has passed; but if contrivance this monumental is what it takes to put over an "old-fashioned" romantic comedy these days, the genre is in big trouble. The picture benefits from hilarious bits by some of the supporting players—notably David Paymer, Richard Dreyfuss, and Michael J. Fox. It's a shame that the movie whose coattails these wonderful actors are attached to is such an empty suit.—T.R. (11/20/95) (Village Theatre VII, Baronet, Orpheum VII, and Lincoln Square.)

Babe—Despite the improbable articulateness of the creatures in Chris Noonan's wonderfully imaginative talking-animal movie, they remain in character as animals: the movie never lets us forget that they don't see the world the same way we do. The title character is a piglet who wants to be a sheepdog. Babe and his friends—notably, a farmwise duck and a pair of proud Border collies—act out a comedy of animal manners that is much funnier and much cannier than any recent movie about human relationships: a lovely, stubbornly idiosyncratic fable of aspiration and survival.—T.R. (9/4/95) (Worldwide Cinemas. . . . ¶ Museum of Modern Art; Jan. 18.)

Bio-Dome—A comedy about two friends (Pauly Shore and Stephen Baldwin) who end up in an experimental environmentally controlled community when they mistake it for a shopping mall. Directed by Jason Bloom. Written by Kip Koenig and Scott Marcano. (Village Theatre VII, Manhattan Twin, 23rd St. West Triplex, 62nd & Broadway, Metro Cinema, and Criterion Center.)

Casino—Martin Scorsese's movie about Las Vegas in the seventies and early eighties clocks in at close to three hours, and the epic running time is absurdly disproportionate to the stature of the main characters: a mob-connected casino manager (Robert De Niro); his wife (Sharon Stone), a former hustler; and a vicious gangster (Joe Pesci). Scorsese certainly hasn't forgotten how to make a movie; what he appears to have forgotten is why.—T.R. (12/4/95) (First & 62nd Cinemas, 23rd St. West Triplex, and National Twin.)

The City of Lost Children—Marc Caro and Jean-Pierre Jeunet's nightmarish adult fantasy deserves a place beside such phantasmagorical film wonders as "Metropolis" and "Batman," but (like "Metropolis") it's a cold piece of work. The succession of dazzling images grows tiresome as the plot—about a man who steals the dreams of children—wanders aimlessly. The enterprise has a strongly Dickensian feel, complete with orphans on cobblestone streets, but it's as though the filmmakers had mined "Oliver Twist" for the set design and forgotten to tell the story.—B.D. (Angelika Film Center and Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)

Cry, the Beloved Country—James Earl Jones and Richard Harris star in Ronald Harwood's adaptation of Alan Paton's 1948 novel, which centers on two bereaved fathers, one black and one white, in South Africa. Darrell James Roodt is the director. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Dead Man Walking—Tim Robbins's blunt, powerful movie tells the story of a murderer (Sean Penn) awaiting execution and a nun (Susan Sarandon) trying to save his soul—and, if possible, his skin. The filmmaker clearly hopes that familiarity with the grisly realities of capital punishment will finally breed contempt for the idea of premeditated, state-sponsored killing. And although the picture sometimes turns clunky and flat, as if it were sagging under the weight of its good intentions, it winds up being devastatingly effective. Ultimately, the movie's power to persuade depends less on the shock of spectacle than on the shock of recognition that viewers must feel as they watch a human being prepare himself for death. Penn has to reveal, within a reckless and apparently despicable character, a salvageable soul, and he makes the erratic rhythm of the condemned man's spiritual progress seem effortless and natural: he captures the languid, insinuating tempo of grace invading a locked-up spirit. Also with Robert Prosky. Robbins's screenplay is based on a 1993 memoir by Sister Helen Prejean.—T.R. (1/8/96) (19th Street East 6, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

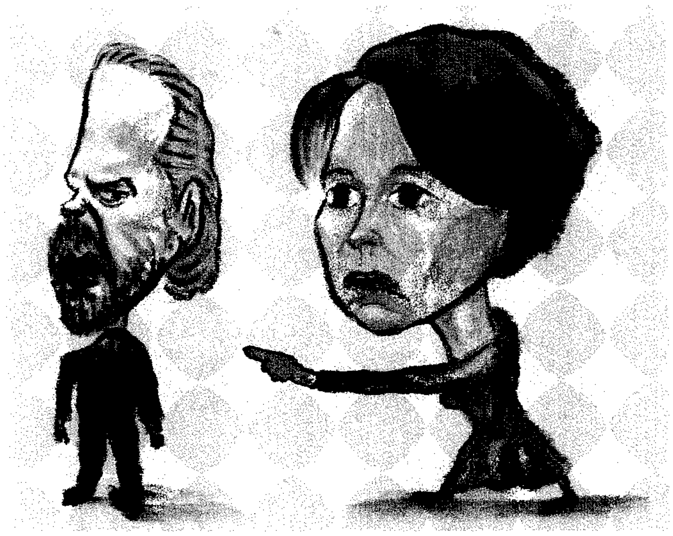
Don't Be a Menace to South Central While Drinking Your Juice in the Hood—The two youngest Wayans brothers, Shawn and Marlon, appear in a spoof that they co-wrote with Phil Beauman. Paris Barclay directed. (Village East Cinemas, Manhattan Twin, 86th Street East Twin, 23rd St. West Triplex, and 84th Street Sixplex. . . . ¶ Embassy 1 and Embassy 2; through Jan. 18. . . . ¶ Embassy 3 and Embassy 4; starting Jan. 19.)

Dunston Checks In—A comedy in which Jason Alexander plays a hotel manager whose guests include a thief (Rupert Everett) and his pet orangutan. Directed by Ken Kwapis. With Eric Lloyd, Paul Reubens, and Faye Dunaway. Written by John Hopkins, Eliot Wald, Andrew Kurtzman, and Bruce Graham. (Village East Cinemas, 34th Street Showplace, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

Eye for an Eye—Sally Field stars as a mother seeking justice after her daughter's murderer (Kiefer Sutherland) is set free on a technicality, in a drama directed by John Schlesinger. Written by Amanda Silver and Rick Jaffa, from the 1993 novel by Erika Holzer. (19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Waverly, 84th Street Sixplex, and Astor Plaza.)

Four Rooms—All empty. In these four stories, set in a hotel and directed by Allison Anders, Alexandre Rockwell, Robert Rodriguez, and Quentin Tarantino, the humor is sophomoric and repetitive, and some of the actors—Madonna, Tim Roth, Lili Taylor, Jennifer Beals—turn in self-parodying performances that are among the worst of their careers. Only Rodriguez's segment, with Antonio Banderas as a suave gangster who needs a babysittter for his Addams Family-like children, holds even mild interest. This movie is a collection of vanity projects directed by a bunch of people who were told they were cool once too often. They could all use a good slap at the box office.—B.D. (Angelika Film Center and Gemini. . . . ¶ Embassy 3; through Jan. 18.)

French Twist—A sunlit French farce written and directed by Josiane Balasko, who also enjoys herself no end in the role of Marijo, a chunky, cheerful lesbian who wanders into the marriage of Loli (Victoria Abril) and Laurent (Alain Chabat) and churns it into a froth. The movie gets going with terrific speed: within fifteen minutes we know who is cheating on whom and who wants to start cheating as soon as possible. At the core of the impending chaos is Abril, who wears comically few clothes, and whose trademark laugh pretty well sums up the picture's gusto. The fun doesn't last, of course. The story settles down, the characters call an uneasy truce, and Balasko even starts to moralize on the folly of love gone wrong. But there's no need to believe her—at its best, this lightweight, salivating movie proves beyond all doubt that love is *meant* to go wrong; any other outcome is a drag. In French.—A.L. (1/15/96) (Quad Cinema and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)


Kiefer Sutherland and Sally Field in "Eye for an Eye."

AHMET GÖRGÜN

Georgia—The definition of "downer." Mare Winningham and Jennifer Jason Leigh star as a pair of sisters; one sings, the other doesn't, although both try to make a living from their voices. Leigh displays her habitual skills but no longer seems to take any pleasure in them—her banshee wail turns every song into mild torture. The film, which was directed by Ulu Grosbard, has plenty of integrity and gallons of rain.—A.L. (12/11/95) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Heat—Michael Mann, the moving spirit behind "Miami Vice," turns his attention to Los Angeles, where an anguished cop (Al Pacino) goes head-to-head with a troubled villain (Robert De Niro). The film, which runs on and on for nearly three hours, yearns to be much more than a thriller—it wants to diagnose the sickness of men's souls and convey the nobility of their pain. The taciturn De Niro and the braying Pacino share a flawless scene over a cup of coffee, but the real honors go to Val Kilmer and Ashley Judd as a warring, loving couple.—A.L. (12/25/95-1/1/96) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, and Criterion Center.)

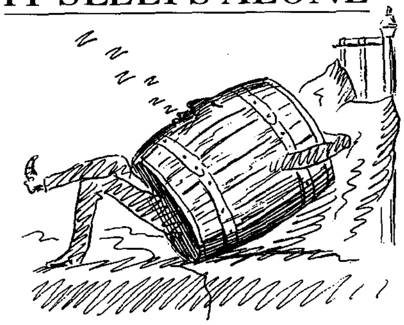
Jumanji—The title refers to an ancient board game with groovy powers; Robin Williams plays Alan, who was sucked into the Jumanji board as a boy and emerges twenty-six years later when a couple of kids (Kirsten Dunst and Bradley Pierce) open up the game and roll the dice. Cue all manner of special effects: spiders the size of hubcaps, elephants in the hallway. There's a touch of Spielberg in the way the director, Joe Johnston, makes these images work dramatically. The movie takes time to warm up, it weakens into soppiness at the end, and the game itself, if you think it through, makes very little sense. Most of the time, however, you don't have to think at all.—A.L. (12/25/95-1/1/96) (Village Theatre VII, Gemini, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia, and Criterion Center.)

Lamerica—A drama by Gianni Amelio, about an Italian con man in post-Communist Albania. In Italian. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Lawnmower Man II: Beyond Cyberspace—Matt Frewer stars in the sequel to the 1992 thriller about life in virtual reality, written and directed by Farhad Mann. (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Sutton, Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, and Criterion Center.)

Leaving Las Vegas—In Mike Figgis's startlingly beautiful new movie, Nicolas Cage gives a great performance as a failed writer who is consciously drinking himself to death. Figgis tells the story as a series of vivid, intense moments; the sole trace of conventional drama is the hero's affair with a kind-hearted young hooker (superbly played by Elisabeth Shue). But the possibility that love will rescue him from his fate vanishes quickly, like a mirage. Although the movie is terribly, crushingly sad, its honesty is invigorating: it names its poison and downs it, neat.—T.R. (11/6/95) (Village East Cinemas, Plaza, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

Nico Icon—German director Susanne Ofteringer's sombre, hypnotic film documents the life of the Velvet Underground's chanteuse, Nico, from her beginnings as a model (she had the icy beauty of a Diana Rigg) to her death, in 1988, as a pallid junkie. Throughout the movie, Nico's music plays practically non-stop: enigmatic dirges of longing and bitterness torn from a soul



IT SLEEPS ALONE

A FRUGAL AND ANONYMOUS SCOT, LONG YEARS AGO, observed that the oaken casks which had been used for bringing sherry, port, or madeira into the country, might be employed thereafter to mature malt whisky.

A PRIME NOTION IT TURNED OUT TO BE. The casks (particularly those that had contained sherry) imparted both a lustrous golden colour and a beguiling hint of redolence to the malt.

SO SUCCESSFUL WAS THE PRACTICE, in fact, that soon all the malt whiskies (among them The Macallan) were matured in this way.
But time passed.

SHERRY CASKS ONCE TO BE HAD FOR A FEW PENCE NOW COST SCORES OF POUNDS. And first one and then another *faint-heart* settled for more expedient alternatives, with the result that today The Macallan is the last malt whisky to be *exclusively* so matured.
However...

A PROFUSION OF OPTIMUM RATINGS IN SUNDRY 'BLIND' TASTINGS of top malts has convinced us of the wisdom of our solitary course. Putting it another way, you might say our virtue is your reward.

THE MACALLAN. THE SINGLE MALT SCOTCH.

Sole U.S.A. Distributor, Remy Amerique, Inc., NY, NY Scotch Whisky 86 Proof, 43% Alc./Vol © 1993

drugged to numbness by her successive environments (postwar Germany, Warhol's Factory, life on the road). With extraordinary technique, Ofteringer paints a moody, melancholy picture of a legend who decayed into the ghost of herself.—B.D. (Film Forum.)

Nixon—Oliver Stone's three-hours-plus biography of Tricky Dick (Anthony Hopkins) is, like its subject, awkward, sweaty, tenacious, and highly impeachable. As usual, the filmmaker has big ideas about the forces that have shaped recent American history: this Nixon is the helpless, sporadically conscience-stricken pawn of a sinister right-wing cabal that was responsible for Vietnam and, of course, the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Where does Stone find this stuff—in pumpkin patches? You could shell out seven or eight bucks at the multiplex and accept Stone's frivolous speculations as solemn truth. But it would be wrong. Also with Joan Allen (as Pat Nixon), James Woods (as H. R. Haldeman), and David Hyde Pierce (as John Dean).—T.R. (Village East Cinemas, Cinema II, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square. . . . ¶ Cinema I; through Jan. 18.)

Othello—Oliver Parker's version of Shakespeare's tragedy—the first filmed "Othello" in which the Moor of Venice is played by a black actor (Laurence Fishburne)—follows the familiar-quotations principle of Shakespearean adaptation. By sacrificing the volcanic flow of language that conveys Othello's pride, confusion, and anguish, the movie leaves Fishburne stranded: his performance is mysteriously uncharismatic. Kenneth Branagh, who plays Iago, has a surer grasp of Shakespearean technique, and his bold, confident interpretation manages to cut through the muddle that Parker has made of the play. Who steals this picture, though, steals trash. With Irene Jacob as Desdemona.—T.R. (12/18/95) (Paris.)

Persuasion—The young British director Roger Michell has made a Jane Austen movie that is never pretty and only occasionally charming; instead, it is troubled, astringent, and touched with melancholy—not unlike the novel. Amanda Root plays Anne Elliot, who once turned down Frederick Wentworth (Ciaran Hinds) and has regretted it ever since. They come together again—in the country, by the sea, and on the streets of Bath—and you can guess the outcome, but Michell somehow tenses a simple narrative into suspense. With Sophie Thompson as Anne's sister, Corin Redgrave as their monstrous father, and Fiona Shaw as the worldly wife of an admiral.—A.L. (9/25/95) (Quad Cinema and Cinema 3.)

Restoration—Michael Hoffman's film starts in the year 1660 and follows a young doctor named Merivel (Robert Downey, Jr.) through his epicurean excesses at the court of Charles II, his purgative sojourn among the Quakers, his selfless struggle against the plague, and his own restoration to royal favor. The sets and costumes are a dream, but the performers—Sam Neill as the ineffectual king, Meg Ryan as an Irish madwoman, and Hugh Grant as a foppish painter—are given no room to breathe; only David Thewlis, playing Merivel's Quaker colleague, delivers any real pathos. Adapted by Rupert Walters from Rose Tremain's novel.—A.L. (Angelika Film Center and 68th St. Playhouse.)

Richard III—A version set in the twentieth century, directed by Richard Loncraine and starring Ian McKellen as Shakespeare's vicious monarch. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Village East Cinemas and First & 62nd Cinemas.)

Sabrina—Sydney Pollack's rehash of the Billy Wilder comedy runs dangerously low on style and completely short of fun. The role that Audrey Hepburn made famous goes to Julia Ormond, who doesn't strike sparks off anyone; the two Larrabee brothers, who vie alternately for Sabrina's affection, are played by Harrison Ford (as Linus the lump) and Greg Kinnear (as David the swell). If you arrive half an hour late, you'll manage to miss the early Parisian scenes, which are unspeakable.—A.L. (12/25/95-1/1/96) (Village Theatre VII, 34th Street Showplace, Tower East, East 85th Street, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

Sense and Sensibility—The director, Ang Lee, and the screenwriter, Emma Thompson, turn Jane Austen's first published novel into a gracious and unfailingly pleasant entertainment. Thompson also plays the very sensible heroine, Elinor Dashwood, and carries the movie without overwhelming her fellow actors. (Alan Rickman and Kate Winslet are especially good; the only clinker is a grotesquely mannered performance by Hugh Grant as Elinor's suitor.) If the picture pressed its temperate charms on us any harder, they would be much easier to resist.—T.R. (12/18/95) (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Coronet, and Lincoln Square.)

Shanghai Triad—A real disappointment from the Chinese director Zhang Yimou, who has lapsed into a grand style of stultifying beauty—a parody of the exotic. The plot involves a group of nineteen-thirties Shanghai mobsters who wrestle for power and, especially, for possession of the famous singing hooker, Xiao Jinbao. Played by Gong Li, Zhang's unerring muse, she livens up a floor show, but she can't rescue the movie. There are ravishing moments, of course, but to Western audiences hoodlum godfathers in big suits are old hat. The glummest element is the young servant boy (Wang Xiaoxiao) who acts as our dramatic peephole on the action. If he can't be excited by the lushness and slaughter around him, what hope is there for the rest of us? In Mandarin.—A.L. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Toy Story—A team effort by the computer-animation company Pixar and Disney. The easy-to-follow screenplay, about the rivalry between two toys—cowboy Woody and spaceman Buzz Lightyear—should excite young children; teen-agers and parents can enjoy the brilliantly executed action sequences. The filmmakers have gotten around the coldness of so much computer animation by using the warm and friendly voices of Tom Hanks and Tim Allen. Yes, it's a come-on for Disney products, but all their children's films are about marketing; at least this one—unlike "Pocahontas"—has some zip.—B.D. (Village Theatre VII, Murray Hill Cinemas, 86th Street East Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Guild, and Lincoln Square.)

12 Monkeys—In Terry Gilliam's thriller, set in the twenty-first century, Bruce Willis travels back in time in order to save humanity from a deadly virus. With Brad Pitt and Madeleine Stowe. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (34th St. East, Beekman, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Ziegfeld, and 84th Street Sixplex.)

Two If by Sea—Denis Leary and Sandra Bullock star as petty-criminal lovers turned art thieves, in a comedy directed by Bill Bennett. Co-written by Leary and Mike Armstrong. (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, and Criterion Center.)

Waiting to Exhale—The film version of Terry McMillan's best-selling novel, with a screenplay by McMillan and Ronald Bass, is a pile of the purest tripe. The central quartet of female friends, played by Whitney Houston, Angela Bassett, Loretta Devine, and Lela Rochon, spend their lives in bonding and mutual counselling; their approach to men swivels between sharklike aggression and Bambi-eyed yearning. The director, Forest Whitaker, appears to be at the mercy of this confusion, switching tones in the middle of scenes and drawing cartoon reactions from his performers. Only Houston emerges with any credit: she gets to swing her stuff on the soundtrack, which is everything the picture isn't—sultry, certain, and quick about its business.—A.L. (1/15/96) (Gotham Cinema, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, Regency, Olympia, and Criterion Center.)

ALSO PLAYING

ACROSS THE SEA OF TIME: Lincoln Square. . . . **BROTHERS MC MULLEN:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE CROSSING GUARD:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **CRUMB** (reviewed in our issue of 5/1/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **FATHER OF THE BRIDE PART II:** Sutton and Embassy 4. . . . **GET SHORTY** (10/23/95): 59th Street East Cinema. . . . **GOLDENEYE** (11/27/95): First & 62nd Cinemas and Criterion Center. . . . **GRUMPIER OLD MEN:** First & 62nd Cinemas and Lincoln Square. . . . **MIGHTY APHRODITE** (10/30/95): Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **THE POSTMAN:** Eastside Playhouse, Quad Cinema, and Carnegie Hall Cinemas. . . . **SMOKE:** Quad Cinema. . . . **SUDDEN DEATH:** National Twin. . . . **TO DIE FOR:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **TO WONG FOO, THANKS FOR EVERYTHING, JULIE NEWMAR** (9/11/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE USUAL SUSPECTS** (8/14/95): Worldwide Cinemas.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
Sutton I and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Plaza, 42 E. 58th St.
Manhattan Twin, Third Ave. at 59th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Baronet and Coronet, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gemini I and 2, Second Ave. at 64th St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
68th St. Playhouse, Third Ave. at 68th St.
Tower East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
Waverly I and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St.
Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Metro Cinema I and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
Embassy I, Broadway at 46th St.
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
National Twin, Broadway at 44th St.

REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

Candy Mountain (1988)—Rudy Wurlitzer wrote the screenplay of this low-budget road movie and directed it in collaboration with Robert Frank. It's the story of a dim, unsuccessful young New York musican (Kevin J. O'Connor) trying to track down a brilliant guitar-maker (Harris Yulin). On his journey through upstate New York and eastern Canada, the eager punk loses a couple of cars, spends all his money, gets arrested, trades observations on the romance of the road and the meaning of life with an assortment of oddballs, losers, freaks, and geezers, and eventually finds the great man holed up in a town in Nova Scotia, where the whole eventful quest turns out to be—surprise—sort of meaningless. This may sound dreary, and it's certainly thin, but the movie has an unexpectedly genial spirit. Frank knows how to shoot the cramped bungalows, the unvacuumed cars, the gas stations, and the country-and-Western dives of his seedy roadside landscape so that we don't feel oppressed by the bleakness of it all. Working with the cinematographer Pio Corradi, he keeps startling us, offhandedly, with the beauty of thrown-together places and lives.—T.R. (Whitney Museum; Jan. 17-21.)

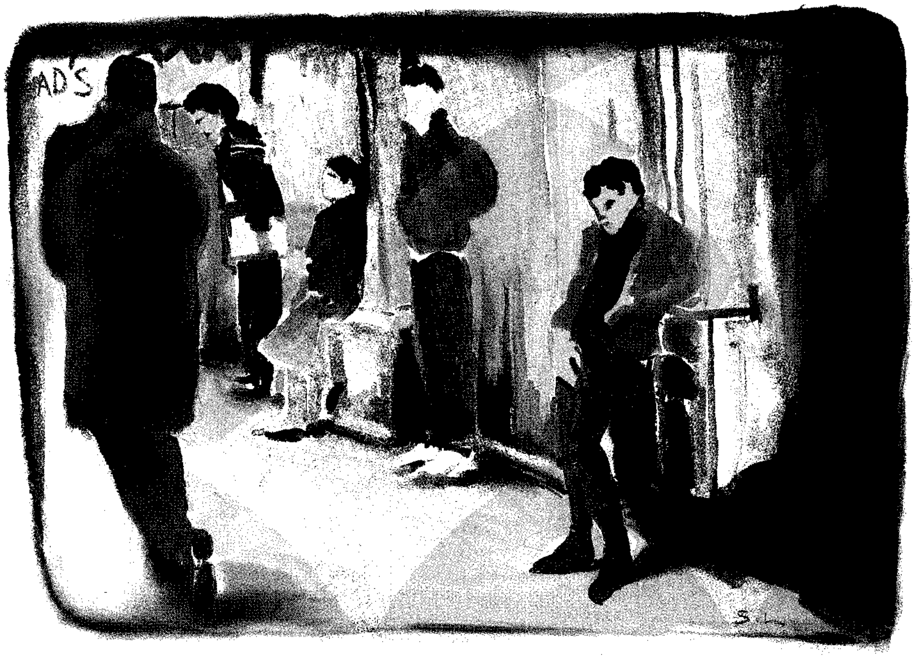
The Crazy Quilt (1965)—John Korty's first feature, filmed in and around Stinson Beach, near San Francisco, with Tom Rosqui as the practical, down-to-earth husband, and Ina Mela as Lorabelle, the always romantic, ever hopeful wife. It's a lightly told comedy-fable on sex differences, on attitudes to life, and on marriage itself. Korty, who also photographed the film and edited it, is a more skillful cinematographer than writer. His next film, "Funnyman," was considerably more craftsmanlike, but this is a pleasantly amateurish start. It was made for less than $100,000. Narration by Burgess Meredith; music by David and Peter Schickele.—P.K. (Whitney Museum; Jan. 20-21.)

Genghis Cohn (1993)—The ghost of a maladroit Jewish comic (Antony Sher) wreaks vengeance on a former S.S. officer (Robert Lindsay) by turning him into a Jewish joke. Irony runs rampant, even out of control, in this BBC adaptation of Romain Gary's novel "The Dance of Genghis Cohn" (a major subplot about a serial killer ends up as a shaggy goy story). Yet in its own brash, abrasive fashion, this TV movie conveys German-Jewish antagonisms more acutely than a politely honed satire could. When the ex-Nazi starts using Yiddish words like "schtup" and "meshugena," the ghetto sounds plopped into an Aryan ambience make for a hilarious shtick. Lindsay proves to be a superb dry comedian—especially when his character sweats. With Diana Rigg as a randy baroness. Elijah Moshinsky directed, from a screenplay by Stanley Price.—M.S. (Walter Reade Theatre; Jan. 20-21.)

The Night They Raided Minsky's (1968)—An affectionate parody tribute to burlesque, with a minimum of plot and a maximum of evocative stage routines. It's lightweight and disorganized; it's a shambles, yet a lot of it is charming, and it has a wonderful seedy chorus line—a row of pudgy girls with faces like slipped discs. Jason Robards and Norman Wisdom play a comedy team, Joseph Wiseman (memorably, elegantly funny) is the senior Minsky, Elliott Gould is the junior Minsky, and as the country girl who does interpretive dancing, Britt Ekland has her warm, big smile that is a happy substitute for acting. Directed by William Friedkin.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Jan. 19 and Jan. 21.)

The Red Inn (1951)—A popular macabre comedy, rather like a more refined French equivalent of "Arsenic and Old Lace" and "The Old Dark House." Set in 1833 in the Ardèche Mountains, the story is about a group of travellers in a public carriage who take refuge in a remote inn. Fernandel plays a licentious monk who hears confession from the innkeeper's wife (Françoise Rosay); she nonchalantly reveals that all guests who come to the inn are robbed and murdered, and he sets about the task of getting the guests to leave, without violating the confessional. This Claude Autant-Lara film is generally considered to be a highly sophisticated satire, but it isn't really as funny as one might wish. In French.—P.K. (Florence Gould Hall; Jan. 23.)

The Young Savages (1961)—John Frankenheimer made this melodrama about juvenile gangs in Spanish Harlem, recruiting some of the boys on location. You're awfully conscious that the picture means to be hard-hitting; it sometimes succeeds, but a lot of it is just worthy. Burt Lancaster is the assistant D.A. who came out of the slums and has now got himself married to Dina Merrill, no less. Others involved include Shelley Winters, Telly Savalas, and John David Chandler.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Jan. 20 and Jan. 22.)



Opening January 19 at Film Forum, Paul Morrissey's "Forty Deuce."

STEPHEN LACK

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2 and 3, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through Jan. 18: "Blood for Dracula" (1974, Paul Morrissey).... From Jan. 19: "Forty Deuce" (1982, Morrissey).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Jan. 18 at 2:30: "The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert" (1994, Stephan Elliott).... ¶ Jan. 18 at 3 and 6: "My Name is Shauna" (1994, Brenda Parkerson) and "Whatever You Say, Say Nothing" (1995, Parkerson).... ¶ Jan. 18 at 6: "Babe" (†).... ¶ Films directed by John Frankenheimer. Jan. 19 at 1: "The Iceman Cometh" (1973).... Jan. 19 at 6:30: "Seven Days in May" (1964).... Jan. 20 at 2 and Jan. 22 at 6: "The Young Stranger" (1957).... Jan. 20 at 5 and Jan. 22 at 2:30: "The Young Savages" (†).... Jan. 21 at 2 and Jan. 23 at 6: "Bird Man of Alcatraz" (1962).... Jan. 21 at 5 and Jan. 23 at 2:30: "All Fall Down" (1962).... ¶ Jan. 19 at 6 and Jan. 21 at 2:30: "The Night They Raided Minsky's" (†).... ¶ Jan. 19 at 8 and Jan. 20 at 5: "Easy Rider" (1969, Dennis Hopper).... ¶ Jan. 20 at 2:30: "Dr. Strangelove" (1964, Stanley Kubrick).... ¶ Jan. 21 at 5: "The Projectionist" (1971, Harry Hurwitz).... ¶ Jan. 22 at 12:30: "Fantômas" (1914, Louis Feuillade; silent).... ¶ Jan. 22 at 6:30: A new film by Thomas Allen Harris, who will be present.

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level (875-5600)—The Fifth Annual New York Jewish Film Festival. Jan. 17 at 2 and Jan. 18 at 4: "All That Really Matters" (1992, Robert Glinski).... Jan. 17 at 4: "Hidden Children" (1994, John Walker) and "Loving the Dead" (1991, Mira Hamermesh).... Jan. 17 at 9: "Under the Domim Tree" (1995, Eli Cohen).... Jan. 18 at 2 and 6:15: "A Kiss to This Land" (1994, Daniel Goldberg).... Jan. 18 at 8:45: "One Survivor Remembers" (1995, Kary Antholis) and "So We Said Goodbye" (1991, Jorge Gurvich).... Jan. 20 at 7 and Jan. 21 at 8:45: "Genghis Cohn" (†).... Jan. 20 at 9:15 and Jan. 21 at 4: "The Voyage of the St. Louis" (1994, Maziar Bahari) and "Havana Nagila: The Jews of Cuba" (1995, Laura Paull).... Jan. 21 at 2 and Jan. 23 at 2 and 6:30: "The City Without Jews" (1924, H. K. Breslauer).... Jan. 21 at 6:30: "Happy New Year" (1993, Jacek Bromski).... Jan. 23 at 4:15: "Dealers Among Dealers" (1995, Gaylen Ross).... Jan. 23 at 8:30: "Altalena" (1994, Ilana Tsur) and "Inside God's Bunker" (1994, Micha Peled).... ¶ Jan. 20 at 2: "King Solomon's Mines" (1950, Compton Bennett and Andrew Marton).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (1-718 784-0077)—Jan. 20 at 2: "Time Bandit" (1981, Terry Gilliam).... Jan. 20 at 4:30: "One-Eyed Jacks" (1961, Marlon Brando).... Jan. 21 at 2: "The Adventures of Baron Munchausen" (1989, Gilliam).... Jan. 21 at 4:30: "The Fisher King" (1991, Gilliam).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Jan. 21 at 7, the feature will be "Cleopatra Jones and the Casino of Gold" (1975, Chuck Bail), with Tamara Dobson.

Whitney Museum, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-0537)—"Beat Culture and the New America: 1950-65." Jan. 17 at 1:30, Jan. 18 at 2:30, and Jan. 19 at 1:30: Short films by Larry Jordon, James Broughton, and Ruth Weiss.... Jan. 20-21 at 1:30: "The Crazy Quilt" (†).... ¶ Films by Robert Frank. Jan. 17 at 4, Jan. 18 at 6:15, and Jan. 19-21 at 4: "Candy Mountain" (†).

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—Jan. 23 at 7: "Metropolis" (1926, Fritz Lang; silent).... Jan. 23 at 8:45: "Dr. Strangelove" (1964, Stanley Kubrick).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Jan. 23 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "The Red Inn" (†).

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

SNOW NEWS WEEK

Now that the threat of nuclear demolition has passed (at least for the moment), it is reassuring to know that a snowfall can provide what the strategic rockets of the Red Army no longer can: intimations of the Big One. What once might have seemed like a glory—a city carpeted with frost and quiet—has played out in the New York press not merely as an inconvenience but as the suffering of millions, the endurance of apocalypse.

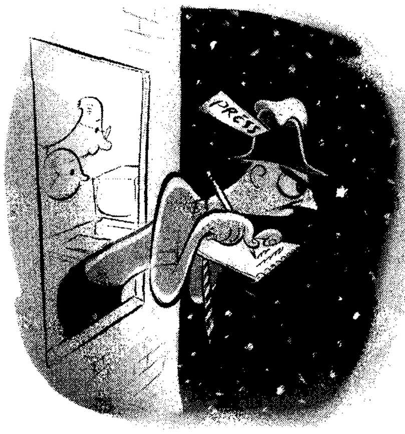
Amazingly, neither the tabloids nor the local newscasts, expert as they are in the arts of excitement, could hope to match the *Times* in its ability to conjure out of an episode of precipitation the imagery of threat, attack, and even doom. For last Monday's paper, the first morning after the snow, the *Times* led the paper with language worthy of Genesis—or of Whittaker Chambers, at least:

"A monstrous, crippling blizzard that experts said would make history attacked the New York metropolitan region and much of the East yesterday with blinding snow that was expected to become more than two feet deep before ending today. It disrupted travel, commerce and life for millions." (Only stories of the highest moment are permitted lead paragraphs of two sentences. Here, of course, there was no doubt: it was *snowing*.) The *Times* reporter Robert D. McFadden went on to say that the storm had "barreled up the Atlantic Seaboard and like enemy bombers targeted coastal cities."

Local television had its own set of snow-news images: the snowbound bus, the closeup of a car wheel spinning on the ice, the humor guy doing his report outside in a lawn chair. But, trope for trope, no one could touch the *Times*. Students at the Columbia School of Journalism will undoubtedly study the technique for years to come: the assigning to the snow a conscious malevolence, the sharpness of the active verbs, the engorgement of the story's importance with the use of "history" and "experts" and "millions." The enemy bombers are straight out of "Dr. Strangelove," only now the forces of evil are blanketing us with powder!

If the *Times* captured the city title for the grandeur of its snow coverage, the over-all Northeast Corridor title must be awarded to the country's next-best daily, the Washington *Post*. The fix, of course, was in. Where weather is concerned, the District of Columbia has a peculiar habit of remembering well its sweltering summers but acting as if the snows of winter were a shock, as if the capital were on the latitude of Papeete. Moreover, the paper's executive editor, Leonard Downie, hates animal stories but is a serious weather buff. One day, the morning dew will make the front page.

Last week's *Post* was nearly an all-weather affair. Forget the news sections. The verbs "to slog" and "to brave" were out "in force." The finest snow story of all, however, was buried on page D14 in last Wednesday's paper, a reminiscence of the snows of yesteryear and the origins of the weather-narrative form in newsrooms. "Whenever we get a snow like this," the reporter Ken Ringle began, "I remember the Blizzard of 1966 and a little old lady named Grace Popkins, who taught me to love weather stories."



In all, a fantastic week for journalism. The only journalist who may have found the blizzard a bane was William Safire. It's not every week that the President of the United States offers to punch you in the nose. Alas, amid the frosty signs of Armageddon, it was second-order news.

N.Y. SNOW-HOW

It takes something like a blizzard to remind most Manhattanites that their island does, in fact, have topography. Last Monday, Day Two of the already historic Blizzard of '96, there was evidence all around that this island does indeed exist in nature and is not some synthetic, protected human sanctuary. The streets were for the most part white and silent and empty, cars having been banned and buses having abandoned their missions in frustration. An exception was West End Avenue, where dozens of people had gathered, plastic toboggans in hand, to take advantage of the slope that runs from Ninety-eighth Street down to Ninety-sixth. One man, plodding back up after a good, swift run, smiled and shook his head with vigor. "*Unbelievable!*" he said, pointing to the blanched asphalt. "This is a *hill!*"

Many more sledders could be found nearby at the crest of the neighborhood's steepest incline, off Riverside Drive at Ninety-first Street. By Monday afternoon, they had carved out several well-packed runs, and scores of people were lining up to use them. As the lines moved

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ERIC PALMA

WINTER OF HIS CONTENT

THE late-December blizzard of 1947, with a twenty-six-and-a-half-inch snowfall that remains unsurpassed, even by last week's mighty storm, got its work done quickly, as I recall, and perhaps with more effect. My office closed down just after lunch that Friday, and I walked to the subway through movielike handfuls of flying flakes. The next day came clear by midmorning and showed a city stopped not just in its tracks but in midstride. On upper Broadway, buses and laundry trucks and cabs stood at odd angles to one another in the avenue, abandoned in midstream and then wind-smoothed into white monuments that stood about meaningfully in the dazzling low sunlight. Television's weatherpersons and moving radar projections had not yet come along, and natural events like this unexpected Washington Heights tableau still held a kick.

The blizzard also felt like an adventure because my wife and I were expecting the birth of our first child at any moment. When I got home from my office, we realized that the trip to the hospital, if it came that night, would be by subway. Only then, I think, did I bring up the subject of our tennis tickets—following it with the brilliant reminder that Madison Square Garden, where Jack Kramer would take on Bobby Riggs that very evening, was actually closer to our hospital than we were, stuck way uptown, at home.

And so we went, bundled to the eyes and trudging carefully but cheerily along, through drifts and down and up flights of stairs, holding on to each other and to the pleasure of our crazy outing. The Garden—the smoky, *intime* old Garden, on Fiftieth and Eighth—was jam-packed, to everybody's self-congratulatory amazement. Kramer, who was making his professional début that night, lost to the wily Riggs, but the crowd and the storm were the main event. The baby, a thoughtful daughter, didn't turn up for ten days. What I felt during last week's storm and afterward is exactly what I felt during that long-ago day, in the blizzard and in the swaying subway and at the Garden, and through the next day, as well: I simply felt good.

—ROGER ANGELL

---

along steadily toward push-off points, the pervasiveness of old-fashioned New York ingenuity became more and more apparent. While some folks had shown up with store-bought plastic disks or inner tubes or Flexible Flyers, many more had improvised. Would-be lugers were utilizing everything from garbage-can lids to pizza boxes and Hefty bags. A few had recruited old parkas or shovels. Two guys were doing quite well on plastic shopping bags from Duane Reade. "We use the handles to steer," they bragged, and indeed they did. Most revered, though, was the fellow who showed up with a five-foot-long billboard advertising a production of "A Christmas Carol," which he had lifted from the Ninety-sixth Street subway station. "The show's closed," he said. "I figure, what the hell?"

HE GETS NO KICK FROM CAMPAIGNS

AT the outset of a hearing last month in the case of Albanese, et al. v. the Federal Election Commission, Susan Molinari, et al., in the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit in Manhattan, there was a moment of consternation. Judge Amalya Lyle Kearse, who was presiding over the three-judge panel, called the case to order. Molinari, the congresswoman from Staten Island, was represented by an austerely dressed attorney with the Office of the General Counsel to the House of Representatives, who sat at a table to the judges' left. At the table to their right sat the plaintiffs' attorneys, including a bespectacled and somewhat mop-topped young man named John Bonifaz. There was a discernible sense of surprise among the judges when Bonifaz, who is twenty-nine, stood to address them, perhaps because, as one of his colleagues put it, Bonifaz "looks less like an attorney than like a messenger boy." But when he began the argument to which he has devoted himself for the past four years—that the current system of financing political campaigns excludes a significant portion of the public from the electoral process—his age was no longer the issue. A judge interrupted Bonifaz to ask if he was seeking to have the entire federal campaign-finance system declared "illegal because it's unconstitutional." Bonifaz was politic in his response, but the short answer was yes.

IF Bonifaz has his way, Albanese v. the F.E.C. will be a vehicle for the eradication of the current system of financing political campaigns. The case was brought by City Councilman Sal Albanese and a group of thirteen New York voters in the aftermath of his 1992 congressional race against the Republican incumbent, Susan Molinari. Albanese lost that race, and in the process was outspent five hundred and twenty-four thousand dollars to two hundred and sixty-seven thousand. The disparity is actually less than the national average: in 1994, House incumbents outspent challengers by more than two and a half to one.

Soon after his loss, Albanese read an article in the *Yale Law & Policy Review* co-written by Bonifaz and Jamin Raskin, now the associate dean at American University's Washington College of Law. Bonifaz and Raskin argued that the system violates voters' constitutional guarantee of equal protection in the same way as did poll taxes and whites-only primaries—practices that have been abolished by the Supreme Court. In the article, Bonifaz and Raskin coined the term "wealth primary," for the unofficial fund-raising contest that begins before candidates even declare and heavily favors incumbents. "The fallout is seen not only in who gets in then gets out but in those who choose not to run because they're so discouraged by the money barrier," Bonifaz said the other day. The solution he and Raskin proposed is one that Congress has scoffed at: full public financing of campaigns.

After reading the article, Albanese got in touch with Bonifaz, who is now the executive director of the nonprofit National Voting Rights Institute, in Boston, and, with several of his supporters—including a bus driver, a public-school teacher, a carpenter, and a police officer—filed the suit against the F.E.C., Molinari, and her reëlection committee. Last year, the defendants persuaded Judge I. Leo Glasser that the plaintiffs had no legal standing to bring the case. The recent hearing was an appeal of that decision.

The obstacles to Albanese v. the F.E.C. are many, but the most difficult to overcome may be the Supreme Court precedent set in 1976 in Buckley v. Valeo—a decision that equated private political contributions with free speech and thus gave them First Amendment protection. That case, which Bonifaz called "a mistake—the Plessy v. Ferguson of our time," is staunchly defended by free-speech advocacy groups like the A.C.L.U. "I think they've really lost touch with their membership on this one," Bonifaz said, "because the effect of the wealth primary is to limit the free speech of the nonwealthy." Bonifaz is also at odds with Common Cause, a group that has long been outspoken on the issue of campaign-finance reform. "They have focussed on PACs," Bonifaz said. "People say, 'If we could just get rid of PACs, we'd fix everything,' but PAC money and private money from wealthy individuals ultimately come from the same place: corporations." Bonifaz is targeting members of the A.C.L.U. and Common Cause as potential advocates, and he is making inroads: he has found sympathizers in the state chapters of both groups. Unlike the piecemeal reforms proposed by both political parties, "our case is about fundamental constitutional rights," Bonifaz said. "We say you cannot have a political system in which the ability to have your voice heard depends on wealth."

Sal Albanese and John Bonifaz

While awaiting word from the appeals court on the status of the case, Bonifaz has made clear that a loss, should it occur, would be only a short-term setback. "If we lose this, we won't be deterred," he said, "because then we would not be doing our duty to the long history of the struggle in this country to access the vote. The poll tax went before the Supreme Court three times before it was overturned, in 1966. We're in this for the long haul."

A CAPOTE LEGACY

TRUMAN CAPOTE disdained literary critics in general, and in particular those who remained convinced that his fascination with outsiders was not his "real" work and that the brittle sheen of his celebrity was. Those critics probably didn't know much about the great affection Capote had for one critic and academic in particular—the formidable Newton Arvin, a scholar of nineteenth-century American literature. In Arvin's memory, Capote established the Truman Capote Lifetime Achievement Award in Literary Criticism, and last week its inaugural award ceremony took place, honoring its first recipient, the critic and literary historian Alfred Kazin.

Arvin was twenty-three years older than Capote when they first met, at Yaddo, the artists' colony, in 1946. The twenty-two-year-old Capote was at work on his first novel, "Other Voices, Other Rooms," and Arvin was already very much the éminence grise of American literary history, having written an extraordinary study of Hawthorne and begun his acclaimed biography of Melville. Capote's opposite in nearly every way—Arvin was shy, taciturn, learned—he became Capote's lover for three years, during which time he also became Capote's university, drawing for him a portrait of the history of American writers, among whose exalted company he placed the young and not yet famous Capote, whom Arvin never *didn't* consider a serious artist.

Arvin's life and work ended in scandal—in 1960, three years before his death, he was arrested for collecting and trading pornography, and was forcibly retired from Smith College, where he had been an English professor for thirty-eight years. But his protégé never forgot him: Capote loved Arvin the way he loved most outsiders.

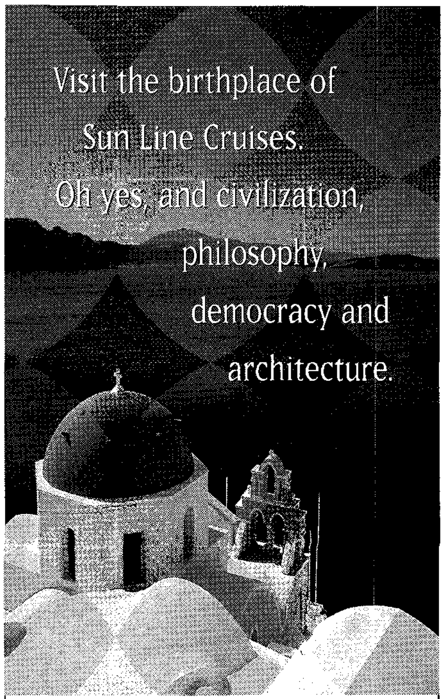
"If Proust had not fallen for a chauffeur, we would not have had the treacherous Albertine in 'Remembrance of Things Past.' If Virginia Woolf hadn't liked the way Vita Sackville-West ordered the butcher around, we wouldn't have had 'Orlando,'" the writer Elizabeth Tallent said, by way of evoking Capote and Arvin's mutually inspiring intellectual relationship. She was the first of several speakers at the gathering, which took place at the Metronome, a cavernous restaurant on East Twenty-first Street. A number of people who had been friends of Capote's or fans of Kazin's, or admirers of both, sat poised to pay their respects, including Arthur and Alexandra Schlesinger, the fashion publicist Eleanor Lambert, and the writer Tama Janowitz.

WHILE the Metronome generally caters to fashionable people who work nearby, this evening it was replete with people who had survived fashion and gone on to define their epoch—such as Phyllis Cerf Wagner, the widow of the Random House editor-in-chief Bennett Cerf, who said to a companion before the ceremony, "Truman *wrote*. That's all that matters. I saw him tear up 'Breakfast at Tiffany's' until he got it just right. The care he took with language was extraordinary. No one should forget that, least of all his critics."

Kazin, who wore a dark blazer that set off his white hair, squinted his almond-shaped eyes when an eager photographer approached. His face, familiar from his book-jacket photos—ranging from the moody but accessible-seeming Kazin on the jacket of his seminal work "On Native Grounds" (published when he was twenty-seven) to the more accessible and less moody-looking Kazin on his groundbreaking "New York Jew" (published twenty-six years later)—registered delight and humility when friends and acquaintances stopped by his table to wish him well. One man asked him if he'd ever met Capote. "Oh, yes," Kazin said, brightly. "And I went to that party he gave at the Plaza. What an event!"

Kazin had crossed paths with Arvin, too. As a young Brooklyn-born maverick, Kazin had taught at Smith, and, ironically, as he explained in his remarks, Arvin hadn't thought very highly of him. ♦

"Snow News Week," David Remnick; "N.Y. Snow-How," Richard Rubin; "He Gets No Kick from Campaigns," Warren St. John; "A Capote Legacy," Hilton Als.



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DEPT. OF DISPUTATION

BLOWUP

Who can be blamed for disasters like the Challenger explosion, a decade ago? No one, according to the new risk theorists, and we'd better get used to it.

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

In the technological age, there is a ritual to disaster. When planes crash or chemical plants explode, each piece of physical evidence—of twisted metal or fractured concrete—becomes a kind of fetish object, painstakingly located, mapped, tagged, and analyzed, with findings submitted to boards of inquiry that then probe and interview and soberly draw conclusions. It is a ritual of reassurance, based on the principle that what we learn from one accident can help us prevent another, and a measure of its effectiveness is that Americans did not shut down the nuclear industry after Three Mile Island and do not abandon the skies after each new plane crash. But the rituals of disaster have rarely been played out so dramatically as they were in the case of the Challenger space shuttle, which blew up over southern Florida on January 28th ten years ago.

Fifty-five minutes after the explosion, when the last of the debris had fallen into the ocean, recovery ships were on the scene. They remained there for the next three months, as part of what turned into the largest maritime salvage operation in history, combing a hundred and fifty thousand square nautical miles for floating debris, while the ocean floor surrounding the crash site was inspected by submarines. In mid-April of 1986, the salvage team found several chunks of charred metal that confirmed what had previously been only suspected: the explosion was caused by a faulty seal in one of the shuttle's rocket boosters, which had allowed a stream of flame to escape and ignite an external fuel tank.

Armed with this confirmation, a special Presidential investigative commission concluded the following June that the deficient seal reflected shoddy engineering and lax management at NASA and its prime contractor, Morton Thiokol. Properly chastised, NASA returned to the drawing board, to emerge thirty-two months later with a new shuttle—Discovery—redesigned according to the lessons learned from the disaster. During that first post-Challenger flight, as America watched breathlessly, the crew of the Discovery held a short commemorative service. "Dear friends," the mission commander, Captain Frederick H. Hauck, said, addressing the seven dead Challenger astronauts, "your loss has meant that we could confidently begin anew." The ritual was complete. NASA was back.

But what if the assumptions that underlie our disaster rituals aren't true? What if these public post mortems don't help us avoid future accidents? Over the past few years, a group of scholars has begun making the unsettling argument that the rituals that follow things like plane crashes or the Three Mile Island crisis are as much exercises in self-deception as they are genuine opportunities for reassurance. For these revisionists, high-technology accidents may not have clear causes at all. They may be inherent in the complexity of the technological systems we have created.

This month, on the tenth anniversary of the Challenger disaster, such revisionism has been extended to the space shuttle with the publication, by the Boston College sociologist Diane Vaughan, of "The Challenger Launch Decision" (Chicago), which is the first truly definitive analysis of the events leading up to January 28, 1986. The conventional view is that the Challenger accident was an anomaly, that it happened because people at NASA had not done their job. But the study's conclusion is the opposite: it says that the accident happened because people at NASA had done exactly what they were supposed to do. "No fundamental decision was made at NASA to do evil," Vaughan writes. "Rather, a series of seemingly harmless decisions were made that incrementally moved the space agency toward a catastrophic outcome."

No doubt Vaughan's analysis will be hotly disputed in the coming months, but even if she is only partly right the implications of this kind of argument are enormous. We have surrounded ourselves in the modern age with things like power plants and nuclear-weapons systems and airports that handle hundreds of planes an hour, on the understanding that the risks they represent are, at the very least, manageable. But if the potential for catastrophe is actually found in the normal functioning of complex systems, this assumption is false. Risks are not easily manageable, accidents are not easily preventable, and the rituals of disaster have no meaning. The first time around, the story of the Challenger was tragic. In its retelling, a decade later, it is merely banal.

PERHAPS the best way to understand the argument over the Challenger explosion is to start with an accident that preceded it—the near-disaster at the Three Mile Island (T.M.I.) nuclear-power plant in March of 1979. The conclusion of the President's commission that investigated the T.M.I. accident was that it was the result of human error, particularly on the part of the plant's operators. But the truth of what happened there, the revisionists maintain, is a good deal more complicated than that, and their arguments are worth examining in detail.

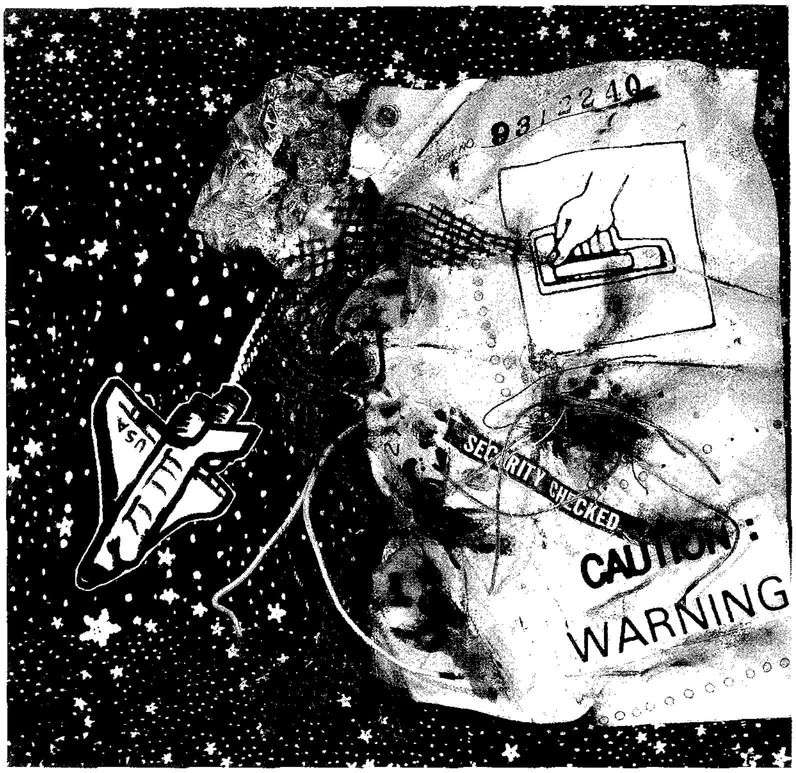
The trouble at T.M.I. started with a blockage in what is called the plant's polisher—a kind of giant water filter. Polisher problems were not unusual at T.M.I., or particularly serious. But in this case the blockage caused moisture to leak into the plant's air system, inadvertently tripping two valves and shutting down the flow of cold water into the plant's steam generator.

As it happens, T.M.I. had a backup cooling system for precisely this situation. But on that particular day, for reasons that no one really knows, the valves for the backup system weren't open. They had been closed, and an indicator in the control room showing they were closed was blocked by a repair tag hanging from a switch above it. That left the reactor dependent on another backup system, a special sort of relief valve. But, as luck would have it, the relief valve wasn't working properly that day, either. It stuck open when it was supposed to close, and, to make matters even worse, a gauge in the control room which should have told the operators that the relief valve wasn't working was itself not working. By the time T.M.I.'s engineers realized what was happening, the reactor had come dangerously close to a meltdown.

Here, in other words, was a major accident caused by five discrete events. There is no way the engineers in the control room could have known about any of them. No glaring errors or spectacularly bad decisions were made that exacerbated those events. And all the malfunctions—the blocked polisher, the shut valves, the obscured indicator, the faulty relief valve, and the broken gauge—were in themselves so trivial that individually they would have created no more than a nuisance. What caused the accident was the way minor events unexpectedly interacted to create a major problem.

This kind of disaster is what the Yale University sociologist Charles Perrow has famously called a "normal accident." By "normal" Perrow does not mean that it is frequent; he means that it is the kind of accident one can expect in the normal functioning of a technologically complex operation. Modern systems, Perrow argues, are made up of thousands of parts, all of which interrelate in ways that are impossible to anticipate. Given that complexity, he says, it is almost inevitable that some combinations of minor failures will eventually amount to something catastrophic. In a classic 1984 treatise on accidents, Perrow takes examples of well-known plane crashes, oil spills, chemical-plant explosions, and nuclear-weapons mishaps and shows how many of them are best understood as "normal." If you saw last year's hit movie "Apollo 13," in fact, you have seen a perfect illustration of one of the most famous of all normal accidents: the Apollo flight went awry because of the interaction of failures of the spacecraft's oxygen and hydrogen tanks, and an indicator light that diverted the astronauts' attention from the real problem.

Had this been a "real" accident—if the mission had run into trouble because of one massive or venal error—the story would have made for a much inferior movie. In real accidents, people rant and rave and hunt down the culprit. They do, in short, what people in Hollywood thrillers always do. But what made Apollo 13 unusual was that the dominant emotion was not anger but bafflement—bafflement that so much could go wrong for so little apparent reason. There was no one to blame, no dark secret to unearth, no recourse but to re-create an entire system in place of one that had inexplicably failed. In the end, the



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normal accident was the more terrifying one.

WAS the Challenger explosion a "normal accident"? In a narrow sense, the answer is no. Unlike what happened at T.M.I., its explosion was caused by a single, catastrophic malfunction: the so-called O-rings that were supposed to prevent hot gases from leaking out of the rocket boosters didn't do their job. But Vaughan argues that the O-ring problem was really just a symptom. The cause of the accident was the culture of NASA, she says, and that culture led to a series of decisions about the Challenger which very much followed the contours of a normal accident.

The heart of the question is how NASA chose to evaluate the problems it had been having with the rocket boosters' O-rings. These are the thin rubber bands that run around the lips of each of the rocket's four segments, and each O-ring was meant to work like the rubber seal on the top of a bottle of preserves, making the fit between each part of the rocket snug and airtight. But from as far back as 1981, on one shuttle flight after another, the O-rings had shown increasing problems. In a number of instances, the rubber seal had been dangerously eroded—a condition suggesting that hot gases had almost escaped. What's more, O-rings were strongly suspected to be less effective in cold weather, when the rubber would harden and not give as tight a seal. On the morning of January 28, 1986, the shuttle launchpad was encased in ice, and the temperature at liftoff was just above freezing. Anticipating these low temperatures, engineers at Morton Thiokol, the manufacturer of the shuttle's rockets, had recommended that the launch be delayed. Morton Thiokol brass and NASA, however, overruled the recommendation, and that decision led both the President's commission and numerous critics since to accuse NASA of egregious—if not criminal—misjudgment.

Vaughan doesn't dispute that the decision was fatally flawed. But, after reviewing thousands of pages of transcripts and internal NASA documents, she can't find any evidence of people acting negligently, or nakedly sacrificing safety in the name of politics or expediency. The mistakes that NASA made, she says, were made in the normal course of operation. For example, in retrospect it may seem obvious that cold weather impaired O-ring performance. But it wasn't obvious at the time. A previous shuttle flight that had suffered worse O-ring damage had been launched in seventy-five-degree heat. And on a series of previous occasions when NASA had proposed—but eventually scrubbed for other reasons—shuttle launches in weather as cold as forty-one degrees, Morton Thiokol had not said a word about the potential threat posed by the cold, so its pre-Challenger objection had seemed to NASA not reasonable but arbitrary. Vaughan confirms that there was a dispute between managers and engineers on the eve of the launch but points out that in the shuttle program disputes of this sort were commonplace. And, while the President's commission was astonished by NASA's repeated use of the phrases "acceptable risk" and "acceptable erosion" in internal discussion of the rocket-booster joints, Vaughan shows that flying with acceptable risks was a standard part of NASA culture. The lists of "acceptable risks" on the space shuttle, in fact, filled six volumes. "Although [O-ring] erosion itself had not been predicted, its occurrence conformed to engineering expectations about large-scale technical systems," she writes. "At NASA, problems were the norm. The word 'anomaly' was part of everyday talk. . . . The whole shuttle system operated on the assumption that deviation could be controlled but not eliminated."

What NASA had created was a closed culture that, in her words, "normalized deviance" so that to the outside world decisions that were obviously questionable were seen by NASA's management as prudent and reasonable. It is her depiction of this internal world that makes her book so disquieting: when she lays out the sequence of decisions which led to the launch—each decision as trivial as the string of failures that led to T.M.I.—it is difficult to find any precise point where things went wrong or where things might be improved next time. "It can truly be said that the Challenger launch decision was a rule-based decision," she concludes. "But the cultural understandings, rules, procedures, and norms that always had worked in the past did not work this time. It was not amorally calculating managers violating rules that were responsible for the tragedy. It was conformity.”

THERE is another way to look at this problem, and that is from the standpoint of how human beings handle risk. One of the assumptions behind the modern disaster ritual is that when a risk can be identified and eliminated a system can be made safer. The new booster joints on the shuttle, for example, are so much better than the old ones that the over-all chances of a Challenger-style accident’s ever happening again must be lower—right? This is such a straightforward idea that questioning it seems almost impossible. But that is just what another group of scholars has done, under what is called the theory of “risk homeostasis.”

It should be said that within the academic community there are huge debates over how widely the theory of risk homeostasis can and should be applied. But the basic idea, which has been laid out brilliantly by the Canadian psychologist Gerald Wilde in his book “Target Risk,” is quite simple: under certain circumstances, changes that appear to make a system or an organization safer in fact don’t. Why? Because human beings have a seemingly fundamental tendency to compensate for lower risks in one area by taking greater risks in another.

Consider, for example, the results of a famous experiment conducted several years ago in Germany. Part of a fleet of taxicabs in Munich was equipped with antilock brake systems (A.B.S.), the recent technological innovation that vastly improves braking, particularly on slippery surfaces. The rest of the fleet was left alone, and the two groups—which were otherwise perfectly matched—were placed under careful and secret observation for three years.

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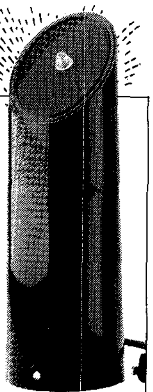

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made sharper turns. They showed poorer lane discipline. They braked harder. They were more likely to tailgate. They didn't merge as well, and they were involved in more near-misses. In other words, the A.B.S. systems were not used to reduce accidents; instead, the drivers used the additional element of safety to enable them to drive faster and more recklessly without increasing their risk of getting into an accident. As economists would say, they "consumed" the risk reduction, they didn't save it.

Risk homeostasis doesn't happen all the time. Often—as in the case of seat belts, say—compensatory behavior only partly offsets the risk-reduction of a safety measure. But it happens often enough that it must be given serious consideration. Why are more pedestrians killed crossing the street at marked crosswalks than at unmarked crosswalks? Because they compensate for the "safe" environment of a marked crossing by being less viligant about oncoming traffic. Why did the introduction of childproof lids on medicine bottles lead, according to one study, to a substantial increase in fatal child poisonings? Because adults became less careful in keeping pill bottles out of the reach of children.

Risk homeostasis also works in the opposite direction. In the late nineteen-sixties, Sweden changed over from driving on the left-hand side of the road to driving on the right, a switch that one would think would create an epidemic of accidents. But, in fact, the opposite was true. People compensated for their unfamiliarity with the new traffic patterns by driving more carefully. During the next twelve months, traffic fatalities dropped seventeen per cent—before returning slowly to their previous levels. As Wilde only half-facetiously argues, countries truly interested in making their streets and highways safer should think about switching over from one side of the road to the other on a regular basis.

It doesn't take much imagination to see how risk homeostasis applies to NASA and the space shuttle. In one frequently quoted phrase, Richard Feynman, the Nobel Prize-winning physicist who served on the Challenger commission, said that at NASA decision-making was "a kind of Russian roulette." When the O-rings began to have problems and nothing happened, the agency began to believe that "the risk is no longer so high for the next flights," Feynman said, and that "we can lower our standards a little bit because we got away with it last time." But fixing the O-rings doesn't mean that this kind of risk-taking stops. There are six whole volumes of shuttle components that are deemed by NASA to be as risky as O-rings. It is entirely possible that better O-rings just give NASA the confidence to play Russian roulette with something else.

This is a depressing conclusion, but it shouldn't come as a surprise. The truth is that our stated commitment to safety, our faithful enactment of the rituals of disaster, has always masked a certain hypocrisy. We don't really want the safest of all possible worlds. The national fifty-five-mile-per-hour speed limit probably saved more lives than any other single government intervention of the past twenty-five years. But the fact that Congress lifted it last month with a minimum of argument proves that we would rather consume the recent safety advances of things like seat belts and air bags than save them. The same is true of the dramatic improvements that have been made in recent years in the design of aircraft and flight-navigation systems. Presumably, these innovations could be used to bring down the airline-accident rate as low as possible. But that is not what consumers want. They want air travel to be cheaper, more reliable, or more convenient, and so those safety advances have been at least partly consumed by flying and landing planes in worse weather and heavier traffic conditions.

What accidents like the Challenger should teach us is that we have constructed a world in which the potential for high-tech catastrophe is embedded in the fabric of day-to-day life. At some point in the future—for the most mundane of reasons, and with the very best of intentions—a NASA spacecraft will again go down in flames. We should at least admit this to ourselves now. And if we cannot—if the possibility is too much to bear—then our only option is to start thinking about getting rid of things like space shuttles altogether. ♦

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LISTENER AT LARGE

TRUE TALES—WELL, MAYBE

Hear about the dog in the suitcase? The reborn rabbit? The disappearing wife? Of course you have.

BY ROGER ANGELL

His mother, my friend said, was an elderly widow who lived in an East Side walkup, with an ancient German shepherd named Bessie for company. When she reached him by telephone early on a Saturday morning to say that Bessie had just died, he was headed out the door to catch a plane. It was the beginning of the long Fourth of July holiday weekend, and he decided that this was not a crisis that would require him to change his plans. He expressed sorrow, but when his mother asked what she should do with the dog's body he was brought up short. There was no other family at hand, and his mother, he knew, would not ask a friend for help in such an awkward predicament.

"Isn't there some neighbor in your building?" he said, hating the sound of his impatience. "Or what about the super?"

Then he had an idea. "No, forget that," he said. "Call the A.S.P.C.A. instead. I'm sure they have a service that takes care of pets that have died. Look them up in the phone book—they're somewhere up in the Nineties, over by the river. They'll take care of Bessie for you. Gotta go, Ma. I'm sorry about everything, but you'll be O.K. Call you later."

DANIEL MAJA

On the plane, he was unhappy about his part in the little drama, and uneasy about its outcome. He should have taken a later flight. His mother was capable and fiercely independent, but sometimes she got things wrong. Late that night, he reached her by long distance and heard the rest of the tale.

Yes, she said, the A.S.P.C.A. did have a deceased-pet pickup service, but unfortunately not on weekends. They were sympathetic. If she could bring Bessie's body over, they said, they would do the rest. She hung up and thought it over. Then she pulled out the kitchen stool and got down her big old double-size Hartmann weekend suitcase from its place on top of the closet. "It was dusty, but it cleaned up nicely," she told him. "And it was exactly the right size. Bessie looked asleep, curled up in there."

"Oh, Ma, you didn't!" my friend groaned. "And what about the stairs? A bag with a dead dog in it—my God. Who did you get to help you?"

No need for help, she said calmly. There was a little bumping, to be sure, but the trip was all downstairs. The same thing was true when she got to the subway station.

"The subway! You didn't take a cab? Ma, are you out of your *mind!*"

"Calm down," she told him. "You

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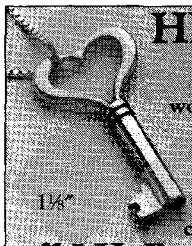

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know what I think about taxis. I got the local up to Ninety-sixth Street, which is the nearest stop, they told me. I got a seat right away. You see, I had everything planned out."

What she hadn't quite planned on was getting back up to the street—three flights of those steep, ironbound I.R.T.-station steps. She had no other choice, so she took it slowly, lugging the burdened suitcase up each step and resting before starting again.

"And no one helped you!" her son broke in. He was almost in tears. "This goddam city—"

"Well, there you're wrong, dear." And she told him how these three young men who had been on the subway car with her had noticed her plight on the stairs and had kindly offered to give her a hand. The bag wasn't too heavy for *them*, of course—in fact, they whisked it up the first flight in no time and disappeared around a corner at the top. "I'll meet you up on Ninety-sixth Street!" she called after them. "Thank you!"

There was a pause in his mother's account here, my narrator said, and then she had to confess that when she gained the street at last her friendly helpers were nowhere to be seen. The suitcase was gone, too. It all came out the same in the end, she guessed, but this wasn't exactly the way she had planned to say goodbye to Bessie. He ventured some words of comfort, but here, too, his mother was ahead of him. "I keep thinking about the look on their faces when they opened my bag," she said in a different tone of voice. "What a crazy city they must think this is!"

I heard this story years and years ago, and I've lost touch with the man who told it to me. He was an editor at *Newsweek*—not at all the sort who'd appropriate a tale like this and claim that it was about his own mother when it wasn't. This is a mystery, because whenever I passed the story along, as I certainly did at the time, I kept running into people who had heard it before, only they claimed that it had happened to somebody else's mother altogether. Except that sometimes it had happened in a bus station, or in the waiting room at Grand Central. Or else it wasn't a little old lady with a dog in her suitcase: it was a sleepy pathology interne on the subway late at night, who dozed briefly and awoke to find that the medical parcel under his feet was gone—the one with the dead baby in it. Or the one with the head of a cadaver. Whatever version I heard, the person telling it to me absolutely knew the doctor or the old lady this had happened to—well, knew the doctor's best friend, who had told the story. Go figure.

NOT much happens nowadays that we don't know all about almost at the instant it comes to pass, and perceptive readers are here telling themselves that of course the little old lady and the dog (and the interne on the subway) is simply another urban legend, and one of the more familiar examples of the genre, at that. Even if it were new, they would hardly listen to it now, once they'd nailed its category; it wouldn't be a *story* to them. Let's try another one, just the same—a story related by a woman sitting next to me at a dinner in New York six years ago. This couple out in New Jersey—they were friends of a friend of hers, she said—were

straightening up their house at the end of another suburban Saturday-night party. It was late by the time the last guests had departed, and the host announced that he'd had too much Chardonnay and was too beat to pick up so much as another plate. He went off to bed, but his wife, thinking what the morning would look like, stayed on in the kitchen, rinsing and loading. There came a scratching noise at the back door, and she opened it to discover the family pet, Tartuffe, a standard poodle, dripping with rain and mud and frantic pride, with a large dead rabbit in his mouth. Horrified, she extracted the prize from Tartuffe's jaws, shoved him into the garage, and then tried to think of some way out of the disaster. Sinkingly, she had recognized not only the dog but the rabbit, which was the adored pet of the eight-year-old boy who lived next door.

Without a plan and without much hope, she began cleaning up the bunny delicti. A little work at the sink took care of the mud and blood. Encouraged, she fetched her hair dryer from the bathroom, and, with assiduous brushing and blowing, transformed the victim into a shining, almost breathing show animal: a rabbit right out of "The Loved One." She slipped on her raincoat, tucked the precious bundle inside, and tiptoed across her soaking lawn and around to the back of the house next door, where she slipped the body into its vacant hutch and, as best she could, arranged it on the straw in the posture of a sleeping pet that had suffered a coronary accident. Noiselessly, she latched the door of the pen, and moments later was safely home again in her kitchen, where she mixed herself a nightcap.

She was awakened the next morning by the not unexpected telephone call. "The most terrible thing has happened!" cried the mother of the rabbit-keeper. "Freddie just came in and told us that Snuff is dead in his pen. I simply don't know what to tell him."

Our resourceful heroine was shocked, then sympathetic, then sensible. "These things happen," she said calmly. "Pets die, and it's always tough on kids. But isn't this why we let them keep animals in the first place? Everything dies, after all—it's part of life, you could say."

"Yes, yes—right," said the mother next door in a strangled voice. "That's exactly what we told him when Snuff died on Thursday, and we buried him out behind the garage. *Now* what do we say?"

I passed this story on, too. One of the friends I told it to, a producer with NBC News, took the tale back to his office, with the usual results. "Tom Brokaw says he knows about the rabbit," he told me the next day. "Only it didn't happen in New Jersey, it happened to friends of people he knows out in Pasadena." Maybe not, said another NBC colleague to my producer friend not long ago. She had retold the twice-dead-rabbit story last year at a restaurant in the Masai Mara, in Kenya, and noticed an Australian at her table nodding his head in recognition as the account unfurled. "Know the family well," he announced when she was done. "The whole thing happened to blokes we know just across the road, back home in Queensland."

IT'S surprising, I think, that I don't know anybody who knows the people whose daughter broiled their baby on the beach last summer. I didn't hear this particular story, however; I read it in several British and Irish newspapers last July, in the early stages of the terrific summer heat wave over there. Mixed in with the record-breaking temperature readings from London and Margate and Cork, and the unprecedented numbers of heat-stroke victims crowding the dispensaries, was a brief account of a city family that had gone off to the nearest seaside strand for relief, where they set up for the day with bottles and blankets and picnic fixings. It turned out to be another blazing-hot afternoon, and when the beer ran out the parents went off to the nearest pub for relief, leaving their seven-year-old daughter in charge of her five-month-old baby brother. They were gone longer than planned, and when they came back, toward evening, they found that their daughter had buried the infant up to his neck in a light layer of sand, and—*yeeks!* Horrible and apparently true, except that later that week a sociologist weighed in, in the selfsame papers, to dismiss it as just another urban myth. "Whenever the temperature gets up into the thirties for a few days, the broiled baby turns up again," he announced smugly. "It never happened."

Good for the baby, bad for us. Yes, this was just another tabloid tale, but clearly a great many thrilled and horrified Brits had heard it and told it to one another long before the first opportunistic reporter got hold of it. Shame on him, and shame on the quoted expert. Who wants scholarship and labellings and common sense when

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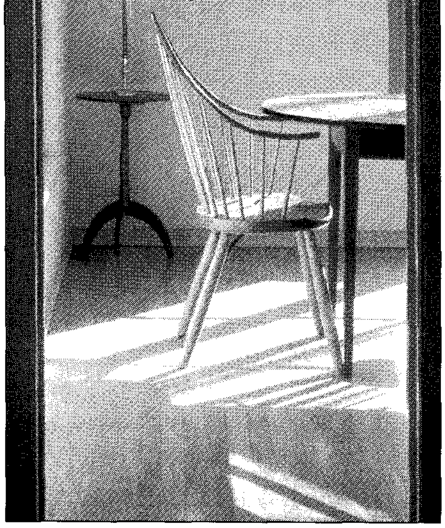

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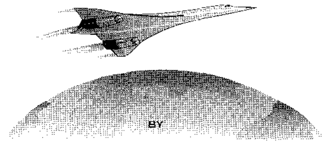

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they cut down a hearty, gruesome, well-travelled lie like this one? I have the same problem with Jan Harold Brunvand, a distinguished folklorist and professor of English at the University of Utah, who has pitilessly published no fewer than five volumes of collected urban myths, none of which I have yet consulted. He is simply doing his work, to be sure, and deserves praise, but in my stubborn old Luddite or Aesopian fashion I only want to be told these stories, without the shirttail exegeses. In a time when almost every fresh plot, exaggerated demise, or weirdly victimized citizen seems to come to us from Buttafuocoland or from another TV cops serial or the latest sound-blasting, overweaponed movie release, let me hold on to whatever scraps come my way by word of mouth, from across the dinner table or while I'm waiting by the Xerox machine. Yes, Professor Brunvand, I am no less guilty than you, for I am clearly writing all this down, not standing expectantly in the agora or huddling inside an elkskin tepee with my hand cupped to my ear, but I have not been at pains to collect these adventures or (with the exception of the broiled baby: sorry) even to read about them. I *heard* them, and mostly from somebody who seemed to have been there, or almost there, when they began to happen.

It may even be that I know something about the deceased wife rolled up in the carpet on the roof of the car (or, in a variation, stuffed into a kayak or a canoe up there). In the tale, a vacationing American couple is travelling by car in a Communist or severely Catholic country when the wife suffers a fatal stroke or heart attack. Rather than submit himself to the inexorable degrading questioning and paperwork and formalities from the authorities, the grieving husband tucks his wife's body inside a rug (or kayak, etc.), ties the bundle to the roof rack, and heads for the border. He stops at last for a spot of supper at a Kebab King and when he emerges discovers—no! no! yes! yes!—that the canoe (or rug or sleeping bag or rolled-up van Gogh poster) has been stolen, wife and all. I was never told the connecting trail of neighbors of this couple, but years ago I did in fact know a Boston architect who experienced the death of his wife while the two were motoring in Spain. A dashing, resolute fellow (he had fought in the Lafayette Escadrille in the First World War), he wrapped his wife's body to resemble that of an invalid, placed her upright in the back seat, and, many hours later, talked his way across the border into Portugal (as I recall it), thus evading the officious attentions of Franco's minions. A brave deed, but was it later distorted in the retelling into a grotesque accidental kidnapping—a variant of the dog in the suitcase? Who can say?

It will have been noticed by now that the common ingredient of these tales may not be severe unlikelihood or underlying creepiness but, rather, the presence of death. If they feel lively rather than funereal, and funny in several senses of the word, it may be because the death, in these plots, keeps on happening, so to speak, and, best of all, always happens to someone else. This is Death in medieval or Bergmanesque cape and shoon—a busy fellow making his rounds, and just now keeping an appointment right across the street from us—and it feels almost safe to laugh at his japes. Stories in this genre that do not give at least a feature role to the man in the bright nightgown (as W. C. Fields called the Reaper) fade into Sunday-supplement innocuousness; those gigantic alligators roaming our city sewers, for instance, which

LETTERS

You could not see the valley unrolled below me
the rusted towers haunting one hill and the glint
of farms on a faded south slope across the suspended
early-summer afternoon unrepeatable as a cloud
from which I was writing to you taking up at a point
farther along it the edge of that loose fabric
already of some length but by then torn here and there
frayed worn stained its pattern always complicated
but beginning to emerge perhaps as what we could
recognize after all under the name of friendship
and from what gulfs and distances and how fitfully
from there on it came to remind us that was the time
when you who had always made much of being my
elder had written of your amazement at finding
yourself past forty with all the early ambitions
surfeited all that brilliance rewarded you were no longer
boasting but finding it empty wondering what
else there might be where else to look and you raised
the subject of the fleet in the bay at Aulis
on the way to Troy when the wind dropped we would return
to that through the years almost as often as you
went over your unfailing animosities
dissolving marriage continuing restlessness
and behind your words so little showed in color
of the countenance of your life once in England
you referred to pastoral scenery as though it
belonged to you and you complained of the English evening
always about to descend and I thought I could see that
but even in your late desperate grasping
at a youthfulness that had never been yours
as you confided I could not see her there were only
your words your explanations I could hear your insistence
your vertigo it was spring the iron stove still burning
smelled of tar but honeysuckle swayed at the window
and along the low wall quince petals were holding up
the light that was theirs while it was passing through them
among the many things of which we would never have spoken

—W.S. Merwin

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I can't help it. I've been doing this ever since I learned how to operate my family's old RCA Victrola back in the prehistoric 1950's. I was born to share music. I managed early in life to find a socially acceptable way to fulfill my "vocation"–I went into radio. It was 1967 when a handful of kindred spirits infused the neglected FM airwaves with a deluge of sound, breaking the boundaries of rigid Top 40. It was The Golden Age of Free Form Progressive Radio–it lasted about two minutes. Once the suits and the salesmen saw the dollar signs on the wall they quickly put a stop to our romp through the airwaves. It was, "goodbye free form fun, hello playlist hell!"

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OPNY

"Oh, that Jane. I thought you were talking about Jane Austen."

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began as six-inch souvenir reptiles furtively flushed away by our mothers.

The Paul Newman ice-cream cone would seem to be an exception. Lady stops at a roadside ice-cream stand in Greenwich, and after ordering her single-scoop sugar-cone chocolate ripple notices that the midsized customer standing next to her is Newman's Own self. Now, just be cool, the woman reminds herself. She pays for her cone, takes a fast, delightful gander, and walks away. Back in the car, still not staring, she reaches for the ignition but then realizes that she has no ice-cream cone. What? She climbs out again, looks under the seat, looks under the car—nothing. She goes back to the counterman for help: Uh, I was here just a minute ago, chocolate ripple—I was sure, etc., etc., and realizes that now Paul Newman is watching *her*. "I believe it's in your pocketbook," he murmurs.

No death here—unless we decide to figuratively carry this playlet back to our old Central Park West shrink and imagine ourselves trying it out on him. "Ahh," he says, happily steepling his fingers. "And what is the ice-cream cone doink in here?" he wants to know. "What do we think about ice cream in our dreams, where we are always still children? Is it not altogether sweet and happy? Is it not first prize—the prize of life itself? And what is Mama's pocketbook, we must ask—that dark place that opens up and swallows up all in the end?"

OUR last story is more than familiar: call it a classic. I have known it all my life, and for a time believed that I first heard it among the ghost stories whispered after lights-out at summer camp. It happens in Paris, during the World Exposition of 1889, when a young Englishwoman and her mother, on their way home from India, check into the Crillon. The older woman is unwell, and soon becomes weak and feverish. The hotel doctor is summoned, makes his examination, and asks permission to call in a colleague. The two consult lengthily at bedside, then bring in the anxious daughter and tell her that her mother is too ill to continue her journey at present. What is urgently required is a medicine that the second doctor has by chance left at home; someone must make the trip there, over to the opposite side of Paris, for the remedy is not available at a pharmacy. Fetch the medicine (the doctor's wife will know where it is), bring it back at once, and Madame will be safe.

The daughter, of course, volunteers for the errand, and is put into the second doctor's own carriage for the journey. The trip, however, is maddeningly slow, for the old coachman seems vague about the route and embroils them in one traffic tie-up after another. At last, they arrive, and the doctor's wife, after long searchings in his dispensary, finds the vial described in her husband's note, wraps it slowly, and hands it over to the distraught daughter. It is already evening when the carriage begins the return trip, and now they become caught in the restaurant and theatregoing throngs; the *cocher* tries a detour, which seems only to take them farther away from their destination. At last, hours after her departure, the young woman abandons the carriage and, after many wrong turnings, finds her way on foot back to the Crillon.

The ending, I suspect, has already been twigged. The daughter's weeping arrival and urgent inquiries about her mother are met with puzzled incomprehension. A sick English milady—we have no such guest here, Mademoiselle. . . . We have met before? . . . We sent you from here this very morning! Impossible—surely Mademoiselle is in error. Did you confuse us with some other hotel, by chance? We regret infinitely, but . . . Wildly, the young woman demands to see the desk register, but her name and her mother's name are not to be found there. Take me to my mother's room—mine is just next door! Take me to Rooms 28 and 29! The inspection is made, with the young woman rushing on ahead of the party of hoteliers, but when she reaches the hall there are no such rooms. Blank walls and ancient wallpaper are all she encounters where she left the patient. Her mother—

Her mother is never found. The mystery, a cause célèbre in its day, remains unsolved in the books of the Paris police, although its grisly details are well known. The ailing Englishwoman, the doctors quickly perceived, was suffering from the Black Plague, an imminently fatal infection picked up, no doubt, in India. Any news about such a disease loosed upon the crowded capital during its hugely publicized Exposition would bring all to ruin. The girl was dispatched on a cruel circuit of planned delays, and hurriedly assembled crews of police, forgers, carpenters, paperhangers, and city officials removed the body, altered the register, and remade the rooms and the corridor. As before in this sort of story, death comes knocking next door—but this time takes the door with him when he goes.

I must have heard or read this story from time to time as the years went by, because I recognized it when it popped up as a British movie, "So Long at the Fair," a thriller made in 1950, in elegant black-and-white, starring Jean Simmons and Dirk Bogarde. Then, weirdly, last year I became convinced that I had not first encountered the ailing memsahib and her frantic daughter while I was a boy at summer camp but had read it in this magazine, long ago. Long, *long* ago: "The Vanishing Lady" appeared in two successive weekly installments of "Shouts and Murmurs" (then a weekly feature column presided over by Alexander Woollcott) in July of 1929. I grew up in a house where *New Yorker* copies and galley proofs lay about in thick profusion, and, an insatiable young reader, at some point must have picked up the Woollcott version and been knocked over by the icy tale. Woollcott tells the story with more dash and embellishment than I have given it here, and in the final paragraph wonders about its origins. He had first heard it rather than read it, but then was startled to come upon its plot, in essence, in a 1913 novel by Mrs. Belloc-Lowndes. He cannot decide whether she made it up or whether, as he says, "it had moved from land to land with the seven-league-boots of folk music . . . told and retold at hearths the world around by people who had never read it anywhere."

What I think happened next is that I took the story with me, carried in my head, to Camp Chewonki in the summer of 1930, and there told it to my fellow Woodchucks after taps. "Listen," I can almost hear myself whisper in the dark. "These people are friends of my parents. This is true. There's this woman in Paris, France, who goes with her mother to stay in a hotel. The mother is old and she's very sick. She feels real bad, and horrible spots are beginning to come out all over her when they get to the hotel. The next morning . . ." ♦

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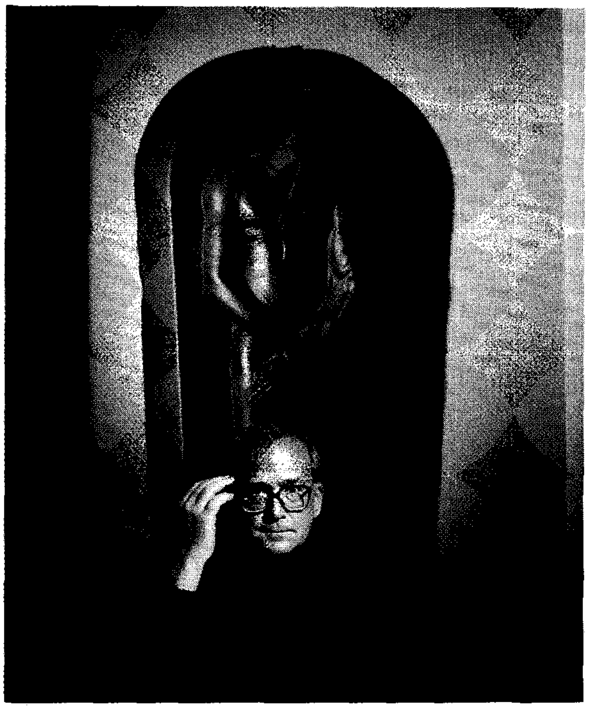
ANNALS OF ARCHEOLOGY

ALL THE KING'S SONS

The biggest archeological find in Egypt since King Tut's tomb is also the most unusual: it may explain the fate of most of Ramesses II's fifty-two sons, New Kingdom funerary practices, and pharaonic sex. What does it feel like to be the first person to enter such a place in three thousand years?

BY DOUGLAS PRESTON



Kent Weeks at the British Museum (above), and Susan Weeks's drawing of the entrance to KV5. Photograph by Dudley Reed.

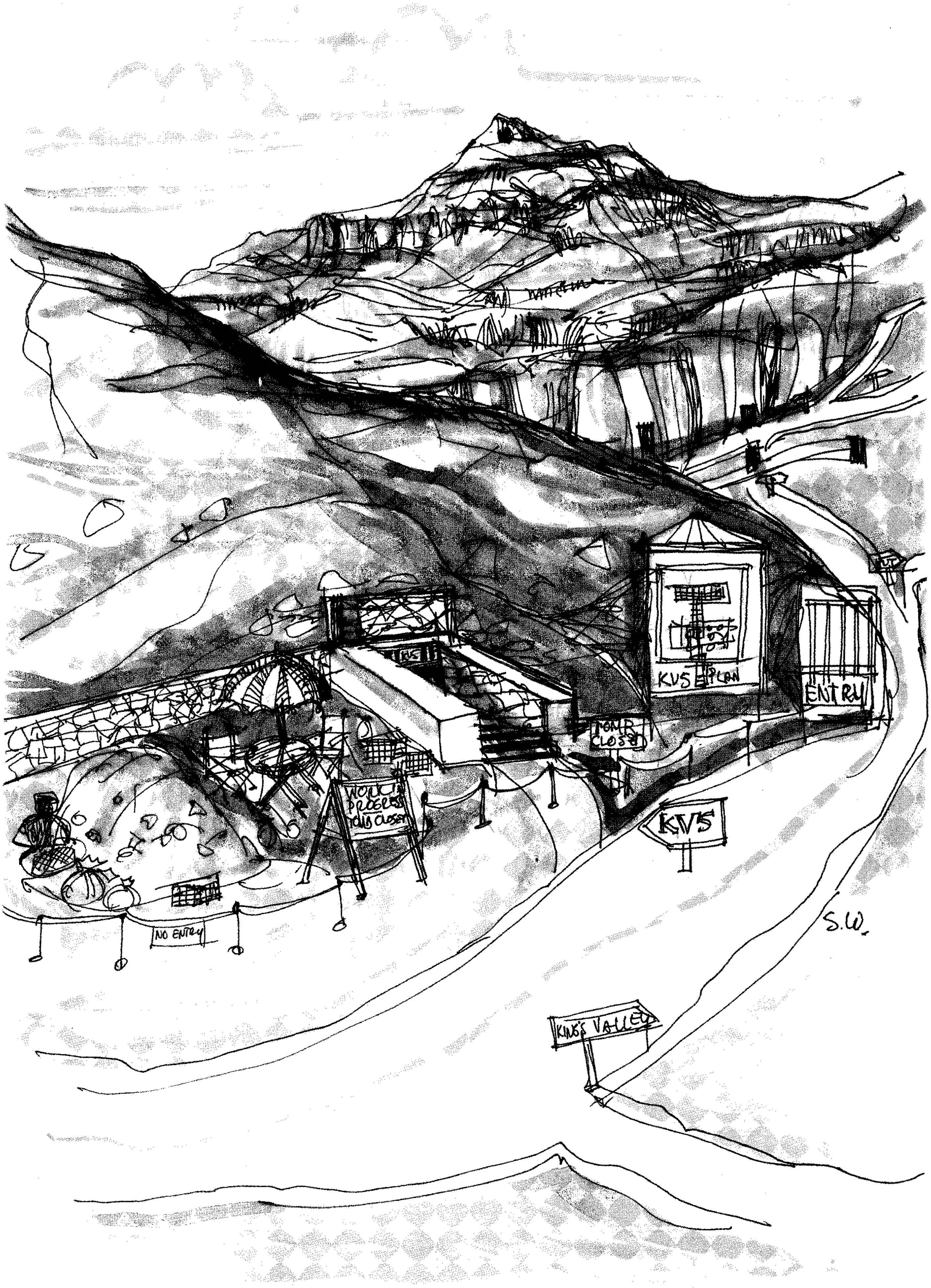
ON February 2, 1995, at ten in the morning, the archeologist Kent R. Weeks found himself a hundred feet inside a mountain in Egypt's Valley of the Kings, on his belly in the dust of a tomb. He was crawling toward a long-buried doorway that no one had entered for at least thirty-one hundred years. There were two people with him, a graduate student and an Egyptian workman; among them they had one flashlight.

To get through the doorway, Weeks had to remove his hard hat and force his large frame under the lintel with his toes and fingers. He expected to enter a small, plain room marking the end of the tomb. Instead, he found himself in a vast corridor, half full of debris, with doorways lining either side and marching off into the darkness. "When I looked around with the flashlight," Weeks recalled later, "we realized that the corridor was tremendous. I didn't know *what* to think." The air was dead, with a temperature in excess of a hundred degrees and a humidity of one hundred per cent. Weeks, whose glasses had immediately steamed up, was finding it hard to breathe. With every movement, clouds of powder arose, and turned into mud on the skin.

The three people explored the corridor, stooping, and sometimes crawling over piles of rock that had fallen from the ceiling. Weeks counted twenty doorways lining the hundred-foot hallway, some opening into whole suites of rooms with vaulted ceilings carved out of the solid rock of the mountain. At the corridor's end, the feeble flashlight beam revealed a statue of Osiris, the god of resurrection: he was wearing a crown and holding crossed flails and sceptres; his body was bound like that of a mummy. In front of Osiris, the corridor came to a T, branching into two transverse passageways, each of them eighty feet long and ending in what looked like a descending staircase blocked with debris. Weeks counted thirty-two additional rooms off those two corridors.

The tomb was of an entirely new type, never seen by archeologists before. "The architecture didn't fit any known pattern," Weeks told me. "And it was so *big*. I just couldn't make sense of it." The largest pharaonic tombs in the Valley contain ten or fifteen rooms at most. This one had at least sixty-seven—the total making it not only the biggest tomb in the Valley but possibly the biggest in all Egypt. Most tombs in the Valley of the Kings follow a standard architectural plan—a series of consecutive chambers and corridors like a string of boxcars shot at an angle into the bedrock, and ending with the burial vault. This tomb, with its T shape, had a warren of side chambers, suites, and descending passageways. Weeks knew from earlier excavations that the tomb was the resting place for at least four sons of Ramesses II, the pharaoh also known as Ramesses the Great—and, traditionally, as simply Pharaoh in the Book of Exodus. Because of the tomb's size and complexity, Weeks had to consider the possibility that it was a catacomb for as many as fifty of Ramesses' fifty-two sons—the first example of a royal family mausoleum in ancient Egypt.

Weeks had discovered the tomb's entrance eight years earlier, after the Egyptian government announced plans to widen the entrance to the Valley to create a bus turnaround at the end of an asphalt road. From reading old maps and reports, he had recalled that the entrance to a lost tomb lay in the area that was to be paved over. Napoleon's expedition to Egypt had noted a tomb there, and a rather feckless Englishman named James Burton had crawled partway inside it in 1825. A few years later, the archeologist Sir John Gardner Wilkinson had given it the designation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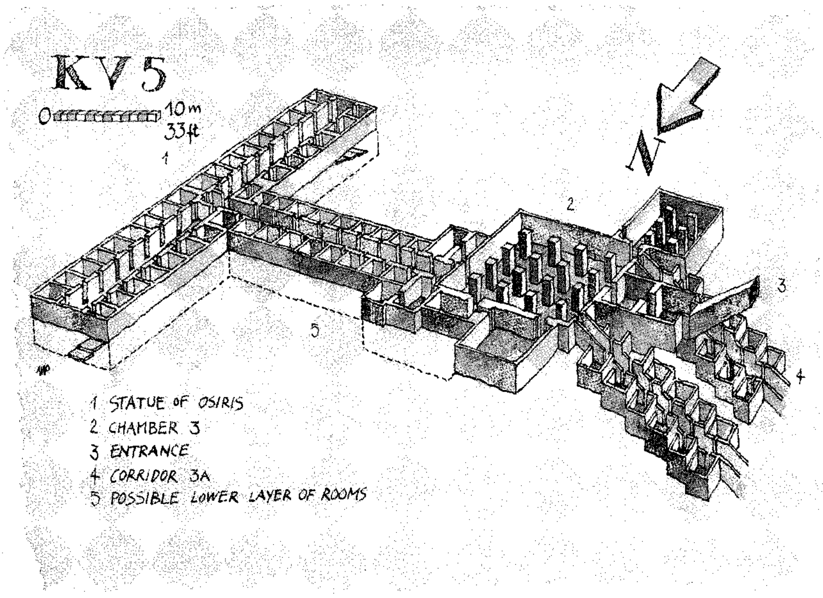
ENTRY
TOMB CLOSED
WORK IN PROGRESS TOMB CLOSED
NO ENTRY
KV5
KING'S VALLEY
S.W.

KV5, for Kings' Valley Tomb No. 5, when he numbered eighteen tombs there. Howard Carter—the archeologist who discovered King Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922, two hundred feet farther on—dug two feet in, decided that KV5's entrance looked unimportant, and used it as a dumping ground for debris from his other excavations, thus burying it under ten feet of stone and dirt. The location of the tomb's entrance was quickly forgotten.

It took about ten days of channelling through Carter's heaps of debris for Weeks and his men to find the ancient doorway of KV5, and it proved to be directly across the path from the tomb of Ramesses the Great. The entrance lay at the edge of the asphalt road, about ten feet below grade and behind the rickety booths of T-shirt venders and fake-scarab-beetle sellers.



A floor plan of KV5, which may be the largest tomb in Egypt and the only royal mausoleum. Ramesses II, the master builder of Thebes, now rests in the Cairo Museum.

LEFT: MATTEO PERICOLI; RIGHT: EGYPTIAN MUSEUM OF ANTIQUITIES, CAIRO

Plans for the bus turnaround were cancelled, and, over a period of seven years, Weeks and his workmen cleared half of the first two chambers and briefly explored a third one. The tomb was packed from floor to ceiling with dirt and rocks that had been washed in by flash floods. He uncovered finely carved reliefs on the walls, which showed Ramesses presenting various sons to the gods, with their names and titles recorded in hieroglyphics. When he reached floor level, he found thousands of objects: pieces of faience jewelry, fragments of furniture, a wooden fist from a coffin, human and animal bones, mummified body parts, chunks of sarcophagi, and fragments of the canopic jars used to hold the mummified organs of the deceased—all detritus left by ancient tomb robbers.

The third chamber was anything but modest. It was about sixty feet square, one of the largest rooms in the Valley, and was supported by sixteen massive stone pillars arranged in four rows. Debris filled the room to within about two feet of the ceiling, allowing just enough space for Weeks to wriggle around. At the back of the chamber, in the axis of the tomb, Weeks noticed an almost buried doorway. Still believing that the tomb was like others in the Valley, he assumed that the doorway merely led to a small, dead-end annex, so he didn't bother with it for several years—not until last February, when he decided to have a look.

Immediately after the discovery, Weeks went back to a four-dollar-a-night pension he shared with his wife, Susan, in the mud village of Gezira Bairat, showered off the tomb dust, and took a motorboat across the Nile to the small city of Luxor. He faxed a short message to Cairo, three hundred miles downriver. It was directed to his major financial supporter, Bruce Ludwig, who was attending a board meeting at the American University in Cairo, where Weeks is a professor. It read, simply, "Have made wonderful discovery in Valley of the Kings. Await your arrival." Ludwig instantly recognized the significance of the fax and the inside joke it represented: it was a close paraphrase of the telegram that Howard Carter had sent to the Earl of Carnarvon, his financial supporter, when he discovered Tutankhamun's tomb. Ludwig booked a flight to Luxor.

"That night, the enormousness of the discovery began to sink in," Weeks recalled. At about two o'clock in the morning, he turned to his wife and said, "Susan, I think our lives have changed forever."

The discovery was announced jointly by Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, which oversees all archeological work in the country, and the American University in Cairo, under whose aegis Weeks was working. It became the biggest archeological story of the decade, making the front page of the *Times* and the cover of *Time*. Television reporters descended on the site. Weeks had to shut down the tomb to make the talk-show circuit. The London newspapers had a field day: the *Daily Mail* headlined its story "PHARAOH'S 50 SONS IN MUMMY OF ALL TOMBS," and one tabloid informed its readers that texts in the tomb gave a date for the Second Coming and the end of the world, and also revealed cures for AIDS and cancer.

The media also wondered whether the tomb would prove that Ramesses II was indeed the pharaoh referred to in Exodus. The speculation centered on Amun-her-khopshef, Ramesses' firstborn son, whose name is prominent on KV5's walls. According to the Bible, in order to force Egypt to free the Hebrews from bondage the Lord visited a number of disasters on the land, including the killing of all firstborn Egyptians from the pharaoh's son on down. Some scholars believe that if Amun-her-khopshef's remains are found it may be possible to show at what age and how he died.

Book publishers and Hollywood producers showed great interest in Weeks's story. He didn't respond at first, dismissing inquiries with a wave of the hand. "It's all *kalam fadi*," he said, using the Arabic phrase for empty talk. Eventually, however, so many offers poured in that he engaged an agent at William Morris to handle them; a book proposal will be submitted to publishers later this month.

In the fall, Weeks and his crew decided to impose a partial media blackout on the excavation site—the only way they could get any work done, they felt—but they agreed to let me accompany them near the end of the digging season. Just before I arrived, in mid-November, two mysterious descending corridors, with dozens of new chambers, unexpectedly came to light, and I had the good fortune to be the only journalist to see them.

THE Valley of the Kings was the burial ground for the pharaohs of the New Kingdom, the last glorious period of Egyptian history. It began around 1550 B.C., when the Egyptians expelled the foreign Hyksos rulers from Lower Egypt and reëstablished a vast empire, stretching across the Middle East to Syria. It lasted half a millennium. Sixty years before Ramesses, the pharaoh Akhenaten overthrew much of the Egyptian religion and decreed that thenceforth Egyptians should worship only one god—Light, whose visible symbol was Aten, the disk of the sun. Akhenaten's revolution came to a halt at his death. Ramesses represented the culmination of the return to tradition. He was an exceedingly conservative man, who saw himself as the guardian of the ancient customs, and he was particularly zealous in erasing the heretic pharaoh's name from his temples and stelae, a task begun by his father, Seti I. Because Ramesses disliked innovation, his monuments were notable not for their architectural brilliance but for their monstrous size. The New Kingdom began a slow decline following his rule, and finally sputtered to an end with Ramesses XI, the last pharaoh buried in the Valley of the Kings.

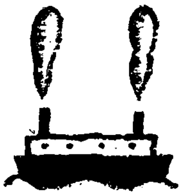
The discovery of KV5 will eventually open for us a marvellous window on this period. We know almost nothing about the offspring of the New Kingdom pharaohs or what roles they played. After each eldest prince ascended the throne, the younger sons disappeared so abruptly from the record that it was once thought they were routinely executed. The burial chambers' hieroglyphics, if they still survive, may give us an invaluable account of each son's life and accomplishments. There is a remote possibility—it was suggested to me by the secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, Professor Abdel-Halim Nur el-Din, who is an authority on women in ancient Egypt—that Ramesses' daughters might be buried in KV5 as well. (Weeks thinks the possibility highly unlikely.) Before Weeks is done, he will probably find sarcophagi, pieces of funerary offerings, identifiable pieces of mummies, and many items with hieroglyphics on them. The tomb will add a new chapter to our understanding of Egyptian funerary traditions. And there is always a possibility of finding an intact chamber packed with treasure.

Ramesses the Great's reign lasted an unprecedented sixty-seven years, from 1279 to 1213 B.C. He covered the Nile Valley from Nubia to the delta with magnificent temples, statuary, and stelae, which are some of the grandest monuments the world has ever seen. Among his projects were the enormous forecourt at Luxor Temple; the Ramesseum; the cliffside temples of Abu Simbel; the great Hall of Columns at Karnak; and the city of Pi-Ramesse. The two "vast and trunkless legs of stone" with a "shattered visage" in Shelley's poem "Ozymandias" were those of Ramesses—fragments of the largest statue in pharaonic history. Ramesses outlived twelve of his heirs, dying in his early nineties. The thirteenth crown prince, Merneptah, became pharaoh only in his sixties.

By the time Ramesses ascended the throne, at twenty-five, he had fathered perhaps ten sons and as many daughters. His father had started him out with a harem while he was still a teenager, and he had two principal wives, Nefertari and Istnofret. He later added several Hittite princesses to his harem, and probably his sister and two daughters. It is still debated whether the incestuous marriages of the pharaohs were merely ceremonial or actually consummated. If identifiable remains of Ramesses' sons are found in KV5, it is conceivable that DNA testing might resolve this vexing question.

In most pharaonic monuments we find little about wives and children, but Ramesses showed an unusual affection for his family, extolling the accomplishments of his sons and listing their names on numerous temple walls. All over Egypt, he commissioned statues of Nefertari (not to be confused with the more famous Nefertiti, who was Akhenaten's wife), "for whose sake the very sun does shine." When she died, in Year 24 of his reign, Ramesses interred her in the most beautiful tomb yet discovered in the Valley of the Queens, just south of the Valley of the Kings. The tomb survived intact, and its incised and painted walls are nearly as fresh as the day they were fashioned. The rendering of Nefertari's face and figure perhaps speaks most eloquently of Ramesses' love for her. She is shown making her afterlife journey dressed in a diaphanous linen gown, with her slender figure emerging beneath the gossamer fabric. Her face was painted using the technique of chiaroscuro—perhaps the first known example in the history of art of a human face being treated as a three-dimensional volume. The Getty Conservation Institute recently spent millions restoring the tomb. The Getty recommended that access to the tomb be restricted, in order to preserve it, but the Egyptian government has opened it to tourists, at thirty-five dollars a head.

The design of royal tombs was so fixed by tradition that they had no architect, at least as we use that term today. The tombs were laid out and chiselled from ceiling to floor, resulting in ceiling dimensions that are precise and floor dimensions that can vary considerably. All the rooms and corridors in a typical royal tomb had names, many of which we still do not fully understand: the First God's Passage, Hall of Hindering, Sanctuaries in Which the Gods Repose. The burial chamber was often called the House of Gold. Some tombs had a Hall of Truth, whose murals showed the pharaoh's heart being weighed in judgment by Osiris, with the loathsome god Ammut squatting nearby, waiting to devour it if it was found wanting. Many of the reliefs were so formulaic that they were probably taken from copybooks. Yet even within this rigid tradition breathtaking flights of creativity and artistic expression can be found.



Most of the tombs in the Valley were never finished: they took decades to cut, and the plans usually called for something more elaborate than the pharaoh could achieve during his rule. As a result, the burial of the pharaoh was often a panicky, ad-hoc affair, with various rooms in the tomb being adapted for other purposes, and decorations and texts painted in haste or omitted completely. (Some of the most beautiful inscriptions were those painted swiftly; they have a spontaneity and freshness of line rivalling Japanese calligraphy.)

From the time of Ramesses II on, the tombs were not hidden: their great doorways, which were made of wood, could be opened. It is likely that the front rooms of many tombs were regularly visited by priests to make offerings. This may have been particularly true of KV5, where the many side chambers perhaps served such a purpose. The burial chambers containing treasure, however, were always sealed.

Despite all the monuments and inscriptions that Ramesses left us, it is still difficult to bridge the gap of thirty-one hundred years and see Ramesses as a person. One thing we do know: the standard image of the pharaoh, embodied in Shelley's "frown, and wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command," is a misconception. One of the finest works from Ramesses' reign is a statue of the young king now in the Museo Egizio, in Turin. The expression on his face is at once compassionate and otherworldly, not unlike that of a Giotto Madonna; his head is slightly bowed, as if to acknowledge his role as both leader and servant. This is not the face of a tyrant-pharaoh who press-ganged his people into building monuments to his greater glory. Rather, it is the portrait of a ruler who had his subjects' interests at heart, and this is precisely what the archeological and historical records suggest about Ramesses. Most of the Egyptians who labored on the pharaoh's monuments did so proudly and were, by and large, well compensated. There is a lovely stela on which Ramesses boasts about how much he has given his workers, "so that they work for me with their full hearts." Dorothea Arnold, the head curator of the Egyptian Department at the Metropolitan Museum, told me, "The pharaoh was *believed* in. As to whether he was beloved, that is beside the point: he was *necessary*. He was life itself. He represented everything good. Without him there would be nothing."

Final proof of the essential humanity of the pharaonic system is that it survived for more than three thousand years. (When Ramesses ascended the throne, the pyramids at Giza were already thirteen hundred years old.) Egypt produced one of the most stable cultural and religious traditions the world has ever seen.

VERY little lives in the Valley of the Kings now. It is a wilderness of stone and light—a silent, roofless sepulchre. Rainfall averages a quarter inch per year, and one of the hottest natural air temperatures on earth was recorded in the surrounding mountains. And yet the Valley is a surprisingly intimate place. Most of the tombs lie within a mere forty acres, and the screen of cliffs gives the area a feeling of privacy. Dusty paths and sun-bleached, misspelled signs add a pleasant, ramshackle air.

The Valley lies on the outskirts of the ancient city of Thebes, now in ruins. In a six-mile stretch of riverbank around the city, there are as many temples, palaces, and monuments as anywhere else on earth, and the hills are so pockmarked with the yawning pits and doorways of ancient tombs that they resemble a First World War battlefield. It is dangerous to walk or ride anywhere alone. Howard Carter discovered an important tomb when the horse he was riding broke through and fell into it. Recently, a Canadian woman fell into a tomb while hiking and fractured her leg; no one could hear her screams, and she spent the days leading up to her death writing postcards. One archeologist had to clear a tomb that contained a dead cow and twenty-one dead dogs that had gone in to eat it.

Almost all the tombs lying open have been pillaged. A papyrus now in Italy records the trial of someone who robbed KV5 itself in 1150 B.C. The robber confessed under torture to plundering the tomb of Ramesses the Great and then going "across the path" to rob the tomb of his sons. Ancient plunderers often vandalized the tombs they robbed, possibly in an attempt to destroy the magic that supposedly protected them. They smashed everything, levered open sarcophagi, ripped apart mummies to get at the jewelry hidden in the wrappings, and sometimes threw objects against the walls with such force that they left dents and smudges of pure gold.

Nobody is sure why this particular valley, three hundred miles up the Nile from the pyramids, was chosen as the final resting place of the New Kingdom pharaohs. Egyptologists theorize that the sacred pyramidal shape of el-Qurn, the mountain at the head of the Valley of the Kings, may have been one factor. Another was clearly security: the Valley is essentially a small box canyon carved out of the barren heart of a desert mountain range; it has only one entrance, through a narrow gorge, and the surrounding cliffs echo and magnify any sounds of human activity, such as the tapping of a robber's pick on stone.

Contrary to popular belief, the tombs in the Valley are not marked with curses. King Tut's curse was invented by Arthur Weigall, an Egyptologist and journalist at the *Daily Mail*, who was furious that Carnarvon had given the London *Times* the exclusive on the discovery. Royal tombs did not need curses to protect them. Priests guarded the Valley night and day, and thieves knew exactly what awaited them if they were caught: no curse could compete with the fear of being impaled alive. "There are a few curses on some private tombs and in some legal documents," James Allen, an Egyptologist with the Metropolitan Museum, told me. "The most extreme I know of is on a legal document of the Ramesside Period. It reads, 'As for the one who will violate it, he shall be seized for Amun-Ra. He shall be for the flame of Sekhmet. He is an enemy of Osiris, lord of Abydos, and so is his son, for ever and ever. May donkeys fuck him, may donkeys fuck his wife, may his wife fuck his son.' "

Some scholars today, looking back over the past two hundred years of archeological activity, think a curse might have been a good idea: most of the archeology done in the Valley has been indistinguishable from looting. Until the nineteen-sixties, those who had concessions to excavate there were allowed to keep a percentage of the spoils as "payment" for their work. In the fever of the treasure hunt, tombs were emptied without anyone bothering to photograph the objects found or to record their positions in situ, or even to note which tomb they came from. Items that had no market value were trashed. Wilkinson, the man who gave the tombs their numbers, burned three-thousand-year-old wooden coffins and artifacts to heat his house. Murals and reliefs were chopped out of walls. At dinner parties, the American lawyer Theodore M. Davis, who financed many digs in the Valley, used to tear up necklaces woven of ancient flowers and fabric to show how strong they were after three thousand years in a tomb. Pyramids were blasted open with explosives, and one tomb door was bashed in with a battering ram. Even Carter never published a proper scientific report on Tut's tomb. It is only in the last twenty-five years that real archeology has come to Egypt, and KV5 will be one of the first tombs in the Valley of the Kings to be entirely excavated and documented according to proper archeological techniques.

Fortunately, other great archeological projects remain to be carried out with the new techniques. The Theban Necropolis is believed to contain between four thousand and five thousand tombs, of which only four hundred have been given numbers. More than half of the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings have not been fully excavated, and of these only five have been properly documented. There are mysterious blocked passageways, hollow floors, chambers packed with debris, and caved-in rooms. King Tut's was by no means the last undiscovered pharaonic tomb in Egypt. In the New Kingdom alone, the tombs of Amosis, Amenhotep I, Tuthmosis II, and Ramesses VIII have never been identified. The site of the burial ground for the pharaohs of the entire Twenty-first Dynasty is unknown. And the richness and size of KV5 offer the tantalizing suggestion that other princely tombs of its kind are lying undiscovered beneath the Egyptian sands; Ramesses would surely not have been the only pharaoh to bury his sons in such style.

WORK at KV5 in the fall season proceeds from six-thirty in the morning until one-thirty in the afternoon. Every day, to get to KV5 from my hotel in Luxor, I cross the Nile on the public ferry, riding with a great mass of fellaheen—men carrying goats slung around their necks, children lugging sacks of eggplants, old men squatting in their djellabas and smoking cigarettes or eating *leb* nuts—while the ancient diesel boat wheezes and blubs across the river. I am usually on the river in time to catch the sun rising over the shattered columns of Luxor Temple, along the riverbank. The Nile is still magical—crowded with feluccas, lined with date palms, and bearing on its current many clumps of blooming water hyacinths.

The ferry empties its crowds into a chaos of taxis, camels, donkeys, children begging for baksheesh, and hopeful guides greeting every tourist with a hearty "Welcome to Egypt!" In contrast to the grand hotels and boulevards of Luxor, the west bank consists of clusters of mud villages scattered among impossibly green fields of cane and clover, where the air is heavy with smoke and the droning prayers of the muezzin. Disembarkation is followed by a harrowing high-speed taxi ride to the Valley, the driver weaving past donkey carts and herds of goats, his sweaty fist pounding the horn.

On the first day of my visit, I find Kent Weeks sitting in a green canvas tent at the entrance to KV5 and trying to fit together pieces of a human skull. It is a cool Saturday morning in November. From the outside, KV5 looks like all the other tombs—a mere doorway in a hillside. Workmen in a bucket

"He's philosophy-driven."

brigade are passing baskets filled with dirt out of the tomb's entrance and dumping them in a nearby pile, on which two men are squatting and sifting through the debris with small gardening tools. "Hmm," Weeks says, still fiddling with the skull. "I had this together a moment ago. You'll have to wait for our expert. He can put it together just like that." He snaps his fingers.

"Whose skull is it?"

"One of Ramesses' sons, I hope. The brown staining on it—here—shows that it might have come from a mummified body. We'll eventually do DNA comparisons with Ramesses and other members of his family."

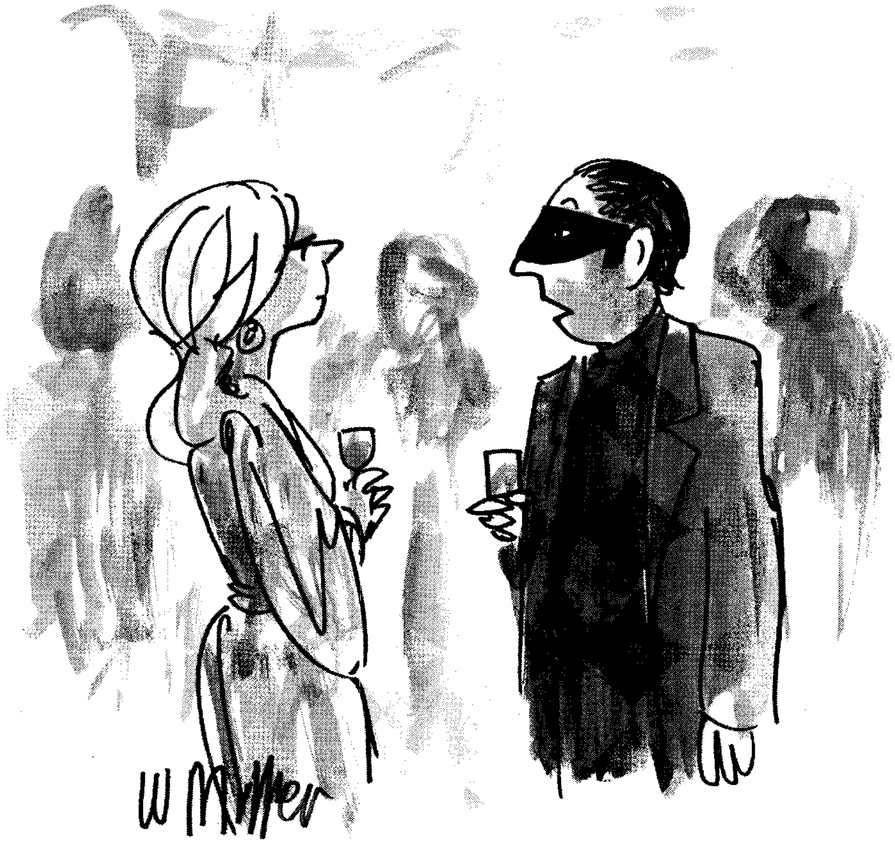
Relaxing in the tent, Weeks does not cut the dapper, pugnacious figure of a Howard Carter, nor does he resemble the sickly, elegant Lord Carnarvon in waistcoat and watch chain. But because he is the first person to have made a major discovery in the Valley of the Kings since Carter, he is surely in their class. At fifty-four, he is handsome and fit, his ruddy face peering at the world through thick square glasses from underneath a Tilley hat. His once crisp shirt and khakis look like hell after an hour in the tomb's stifling atmosphere, and his Timberland shoes have reached a state of indescribable lividity from tomb dust.

Weeks has the smug air of a man who is doing the most interesting thing he could possibly do in life. He launches into his subject with such enthusiasm that one's first impulse is to flee. But as he settles back in his rickety chair with the skull in one hand and a glass of *yansoon* tea in the other, and yarns on about lost tombs, crazy Egyptologists, graverobbers, jackal-headed gods, mummies, secret passageways, and the mysteries of the Underworld, you begin to succumb. His conversation is laced with obscene sallies delivered with a schoolboy's relish, and you can tell he has not been to any gender-sensitivity training seminars. He can be disconcertingly blunt. He characterized one archeologist as "ineffectual, ridiculously inept, and a wonderful source of comic relief," another as "a raving psychopath," and a third as "a dork, totally off the wall." When I asked if KV5 would prove that Ramesses was the Biblical Pharaoh, he responded with irritation: "I can almost guarantee you that we will *not* find anything in KV5 bearing on the Exodus question. All the speculation in the press assumed there *was* an exodus and that it was described accurately in the Bible. I don't believe it. There may have been Israelites in Egypt, but I sincerely doubt Exodus is an exact account of what occurred. At least I *hope* it wasn't—with the Lord striking down the firstborn of Egypt and turning the rivers to blood."

His is a rarefied profession: there are only about four hundred Egyptologists in the world, and only a fraction of them are archeologists. (Most are art historians and philologists.) Egyptology is a difficult profession to break into; in a good year, there might be two job openings in the United States. It is the kind of field where the untimely death of a tenured figure sets the photocopying machines running all night.

"From the age of eight, I had no doubt: I wanted to be an Egyptologist," Weeks told me. His parents—one a policeman, the other a medical librarian—did not try to steer him into a sensible profession, and a string of teachers encouraged his interest. When Weeks was in high school, in Longview, Washington, he met the Egyptologist Ahmed Fakhry in Seattle, and Fakhry was so charmed by the young man that he invited him to lunch and mapped out his college career.

In 1963, Weeks's senior year at the University of Washington, one of the most important events in the history of Egyptology took place. Because of the construction of the High Dam at Aswan, the rising waters of the Nile began to flood Nubia; they would soon inundate countless archeological sites, including the incomparable temples of Abu Simbel. UNESCO and the Egyptian and Sudanese governments issued an international plea for help. Weeks immediately wrote to William Kelly Simpson, a prominent Egyptologist at Yale who was helping to coördinate the salvage project, and offered his services. He received plane tickets by return mail.



"Sorry about the mask. I'm always afraid my fame will overwhelm people."

"The farthest I'd been away from home was Disneyland, and here I was going to Nubia," Weeks said. "The work had to be done fast: the lake waters were already rising. I got there and suddenly found myself being told, 'Take these eighty workmen and go dig that ancient village.' The nearest settlement was Wadi Halfa, ninety miles away.

The first words of Arabic I learned were 'Dig no deeper' and 'Carry the baskets faster.' "

Weeks thereafter made a number of trips to Nubia, and just before he set out on one of them he invited along as artist a young woman he had met near the mummy case at the University of Washington museum—Susan Howe, a solemn college senior with red hair and a deadpan sense of humor.

"We lived on the river on an old rat-infested dahabeah," Susan told me. "My first night on the Nile, we were anchored directly in front

Abu Simbel

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gists

spends much of her day in front of KV5, in the green tent, wearing a scarf and peach-colored Keds, while she makes precise scale drawings of pottery and artifacts. In her spare time, she wanders around Gezira Bairat, painting exquisite watercolors of doorways and donkeys.

Weeks eventually returned to Washington to get his M.A., and in 1971 he received a Ph.D. from Yale; his dissertation dealt with ancient Egyptian anatomical terminology. He landed a plum job as a curator in the Metropolitan Museum's Egyptian Department. Two years later, bored by museum work, he quit and went back to Egypt, and was shortly offered the directorship of Chicago House, the University of Chicago's research center in Luxor. The Weekses have two children, whom they

"It's your agent. Everyone wants a piece of you."

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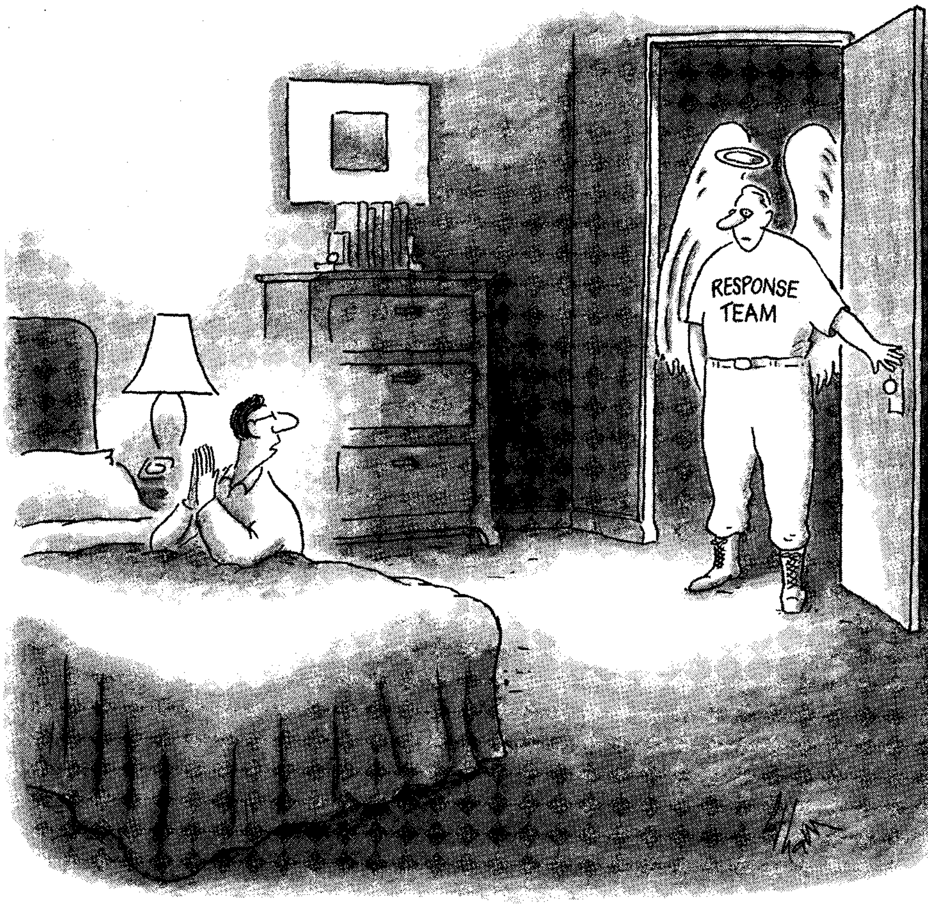
Egypt, sending them to hool. After four years at , Weeks took a profes- ley, but again the lure o strong. In 1987, he e at Berkeley, took a d went back to Egypt f Egyptology at the ity in Cairo, where he ice.

While in Nubia, Weeks excavated an ancient working-class cemetery, pulling some seven thousand naturally desiccated bodies out of the ground. In a study of diet and health, he and a professor of orthodontics named James Harris X-rayed many of these bodies. Then Weeks and Harris persuaded the Egyptian government to allow them to X-ray the mummies of the pharaohs, by way of comparison. A team of physicians, orthodontists, and pathologists studied the royal X-rays, hoping to determine such things as age at death, cause of death, diet, and medical problems. They learned that there was surprisingly little difference between the two classes in diet and health.

One finding caused an uproar among Egyptologists. The medical team had been able to determine ages at death for most of the pharaohs, and in some cases these starkly contradicted the standard chronologies of the Egyptologists. The mystery was eventually solved when the team consulted additional ancient papyri, which told how, in the late New Kingdom, the high priests realized that many of the tombs in the Valley of the Kings had been robbed. To prevent further desecration, they gathered up almost all the royal mummies (missing only King Tut) and reburied them in two caches, both of which were discovered intact in the nineteenth century. "What we think happened is that the priests let the name dockets with some of the mummies fall off and put them back wrong," Weeks told me. It is also possible that the mixup occurred when the mummies were moved down the river to Cairo in the nineteenth century.

The team members analyzed the craniofacial characteristics of each mummy and figured out which ones looked most like which others. (Most of the pharaohs were related.) By combining these findings with age-at-death information, they were able to restore six of the mummies' proper names.

Weeks's second project led directly to the discovery of KV5. In 1979, he began mapping the entire Theban Ne-



"That was fast."

cropolis. After an overview, he started with the Valley of the Kings. No such map had ever been done before. (That explains how KV5 came to be found and then lost several times in its history.) The Theban Mapping Project is to include the topography of the Valley and the three-dimensional placement of each tomb within the rock. The data are being computerized, and eventually Weeks will re-create the Valley on CD-ROM, which will allow a person to "fly" into any tomb and view in detail the murals and reliefs on its walls and ceilings.

Some Egyptologists I spoke with consider the mapping of the Theban Necropolis to be the most important archeological project in Egypt, KV5 notwithstanding. A map of the Valley of the Kings is desperately needed. Some tombs are deteriorating rapidly, with murals cracking and falling to the floors, and ceilings, too, collapsing. Damage has been done by the opening of the tombs to outside air. (When Carter opened King Tut's tomb, he could actually hear "strange rustling, murmuring, whispering sounds" of objects as the new air began its insidious work of destruction. In other tombs, wooden objects turned into "cigar-ash.") Greek, Roman, and early European tourists explored the tombs with burning torches—and even lived in some tombs—leaving an oily soot on the paintings. Rapid changes in temperature and humidity generated by the daily influx of modern-day tourists have caused even greater damage, some of it catastrophic.

The gravest danger of all comes from flooding. Most of the tombs are now wide open. Modern alterations in the topography, such as the raising of the valley floor in order to build paths for the tourists, have created a highway directing floodwaters straight into the mouths of the tombs. A brief rain in November of 1994 generated a small flash flood that tore through the Valley at thirty miles an hour and damaged several tombs. It burst into the tomb of Bay, a vizier of the New Kingdom, with such force that it churned through the decorated chambers and completely ruined them. Layers of debris in KV5 indicate that a major flash flood occurs about once every three hundred years. If such a flood occurred tomorrow, the Valley of the Kings could be largely destroyed.

There is no master plan for preserving the Valley. The most basic element in such a plan is the completion of Weeks's map. Only then can preservationists monitor changes in the tombs and begin channelling and redirecting floodwaters. For this reason, some archeologists privately panicked when Weeks found KV5. "When I first heard about it," one told me, "I thought, Oh, my God, that's it, Kent will never finish the mapping project."

Weeks promises that KV5 will not interfere with the Theban Mapping Project. "Having found the tomb, we've got an obligation to leave it in a good, stable, safe condition," he says. "And we have an obligation to publish. Public interest in KV5 has actually increased funding for the Theban Mapping Project."

At 9 A.M., the workmen laboring in KV5—there are forty-two of them—begin to file out and perch in groups on the hillside, to eat a breakfast of bread, tomatoes, green onions, and a foul cheese called *misht*. Weeks rises from his chair, nods to me, and asks, "Are you ready?"

We descend a new wooden staircase into the mountain and enter Chamber 1, where we exchange our sun hats for hard hats. The room is small and only half cleared. Visible tendrils of humid, dusty air waft in from the dim recesses of the tomb. The first impression I have of the tomb is one of shocking devastation. The ceilings are shot through with cracks, and in places they have caved in, dropping automobile-size pieces of rock. A forest of screw jacks and timbers holds up what is left, and many of the cracks are plastered with "tell-tales"—small seals that show if any more movement of the rock occurs.

The reliefs in Chamber 1 are barely visible, a mere palimpsest of what were once superbly carved and painted scenes of Ramesses and his sons adoring the gods, and panels of hieroglyphics. Most of the damage here was the result of a leaky sewer pipe that was laid over the tomb about forty years ago from an old rest house in the Valley. The leak caused salt crystals to grow and eat away the limestone walls. Here and there, however, one can still see traces of the original paint.

The decorations on the walls of the first two rooms show various sons being presented to the gods by Ramesses, in the classic Egyptian pose: head in profile, shoulders in frontal view, and torso in three-quarters view. There are also reliefs of tables laden with offerings of food for the gods, and hieroglyphic texts spelling out the names and titles of several sons and including the royal cartouche of Ramesses.

A doorway from Chamber 2 opens into Chamber 3—the Pillared Hall. It is filled with dirt and rock almost to the ceiling, giving one a simultaneous impression of grandeur and claustrophobia. Two narrow channels have been cut through the debris to allow for the passage of the workmen. Many of the pillars are split and shattered, and only fragments of decorations remain—a few hieroglyphic characters, an upraised arm, part of a leg. Crazed light from several randomly placed bulbs throws shadows around the room.

I follow Weeks down one of the channels. "This room is in such dangerous condition that we decided not to clear it," he says. "We call this channel the Mubarak trench. It was dug so that President Mubarak could visit the tomb without having to creep around on his hands and knees." He laughs.

When we are halfway across the room, he points out the words "James Burton 1825" smoked on the ceiling with the flame of a candle: it represents the Englishman's farthest point of penetration. Not far away is another graffito—this one in hieratic, the cursive form of hieroglyphic writing. It reads "Year 19"—the nineteenth year of Ramesses' reign. "This date gives us a *terminus ante quem* for the presence of Ramesses' workmen in this chamber," Weeks says.

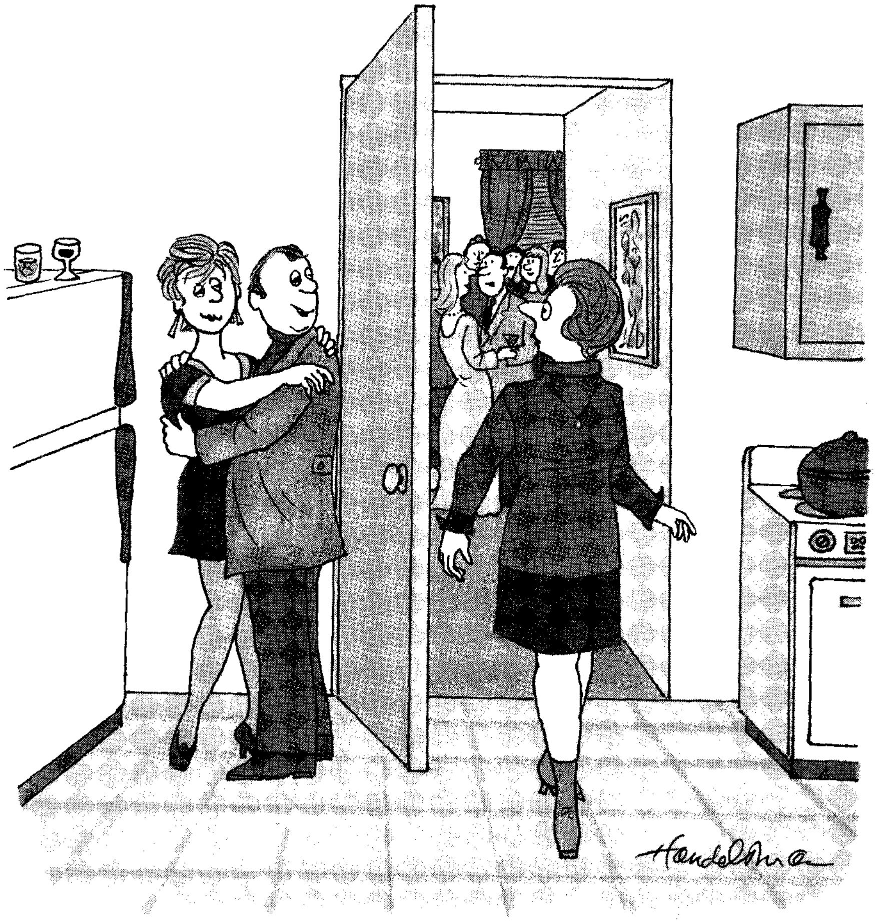
He stops at one of the massive pillars. "And here's a mystery," he says, "Fifteen of the pillars in this room were cut from the native rock, but this one is a fake. The rock was carefully cut away—you can see chisel marks on the ceiling—and then the pillar was rebuilt out of stone and plastered to look like the others. Why?" He gives the pillar a sly pat. "Was something very large moved in here?"

I follow Weeks to the end of the trench—the site of the doorway that he crawled through in February. The door has been cleared, and we descend a short wooden staircase to the bottom of the great central corridor. It is illuminated by a string of naked light bulbs, which cast a yellow glow through a pall of dust. The many doors lining both sides of the corridor are still blocked with debris, and the stone floor is covered with an inch of dust.

At the far end of the corridor, a hundred feet away, stands the mummiform statue of Osiris. It is carved from the native rock, and only its face is missing. Lit from below, the statue casts a dramatic shadow on the ceiling. I try to take notes, but my glasses have fogged up, and sweat is dripping onto my notebook, making the ink run off the page. I can only stand and blink.

Nothing in twenty years of writing about archeology has prepared me for this great wrecked corridor chiselled out of the living rock, with rows of shattered doorways opening into darkness, and ending in the faceless mummy of Osiris. I feel like a trespasser, a voyeur, gazing into the sacred precincts of the dead. As I stare at the walls, patterns and lines begin to emerge from the shattered stone: ghostly figures and faint hieroglyphics; animal-headed gods performing mysterious rites. Through doorways I catch glimpses of more rooms and more doorways beyond. There is a presence of death in this wrecked tomb that goes beyond those who were buried here; it is the death of a civilization.

With most of the texts on the walls destroyed or still buried under debris,



"You wouldn't understand, Muriel. It's a drunk thing."

it is not yet possible to determine what function was served by the dozens of side chambers. Weeks feels it likely, however, that they were *not* burial chambers, because the doorways are too narrow to admit a sarcophagus. Instead, he speculates they were chapels where the Theban priests could make offerings to the dead sons. Because the tomb departs so radically from the standard design, it is impossible even to speculate what the mysterious Pillared Hall or many of the other antechambers were for.

Weeks proudly displays some reliefs on the walls, tracing with his hand the figure of Isis and her husband, Osiris, and pointing out the ibis-headed god Thoth. "Ah!" he cries. "And here is a *wonderful* figure of Anubis and Hathor!" Anubis is the jackal-headed god of mummification, and Hathor a goddess associated with the Theban Necropolis. These were scenes to help guide Ramesses' sons through the rituals, spells, and incantations that would insure them a safe journey through the realm of death. The reliefs are exceedingly difficult to see; Susan Weeks told me later that she has sometimes had to stare at a wall for long periods—days, even—before she could pick out the shadow of a design. She is now in the process of copying these fragmentary reliefs on Mylar film, to help experts who will attempt to reconstruct the entire wall sequence and its accompanying text, and so reveal to us the purpose of the room or the corridor. KV5 will only yield up its secrets slowly, and with great effort.

"Here's Ramesses and one of his sons," Weeks says, indicating two figures standing hand in hand. "But, alas, the name is gone. Very disappointing!" He charges off down the corridor, raising a trail of dust, and comes to a halt at the statue of Osiris, poking his glasses back up his sweating nose. "Look at this. Spectacular! A three-dimensional statue of Osiris is very rare. Most tombs depict him painted only. We dug around the base here trying to find the face, but instead we found a lovely offering of nineteen clay figs."

He makes a ninety-degree turn down the left transverse corridor, snaking around a cave-in. The corridor runs level for some distance and then plunges down a double staircase with a ramp in the middle, cut from the bedrock, and ends in a wall of bedrock. Along the sides of this corridor we have passed sixteen more partly blocked doors.

"Now, here is something new," Weeks says. "You're the first outsider to see this. I hoped that this staircase would lead to the burial chambers. This kind of ramp was usually built to slide the sarcophagi down. But look! The corridor just ends in a blank wall. Why in the world would they build a staircase and ramp going nowhere? So I decided to clear the two lowest side chambers. We just finished last week."

He ushers me into one of the rooms. There is no light; the room is large and very hot.

"They were empty," Weeks says.

"Too bad."

"Take a look at this floor."

"Nice." Floors do not particularly excite me.

"It happens to be the finest plastered floor in the Valley of the Kings. They went to enormous trouble with this floor, laying down three coats of plaster at different times, in different colors. Why?" He pauses. "Now stamp on the floor."

I thump the floor. There is a hollow reverberation that shakes not only the floor but the entire room. "Oh, my God, there's something underneath there!" I exclaim.

"*Maybe*," Weeks says, a large smile gathering on his face. "Who knows? It could be a natural cavity or crack, or it might be a passageway to a lower level."

"You mean there might be sealed burial chambers below?"

Weeks smiles again. "Let's not get ahead of ourselves. Next June, we'll drill some test holes and do it properly."

We scramble back to the Osiris statue.

"Now I'm going to take you to our latest discovery," Weeks says. "This is intriguing. *Very* fascinating."

We make our way through several turns back to the Pillared Hall. Weeks leads me down the other trench, which ends at the southwest corner of the hall. Here, earlier in the month, the workmen discovered a buried doorway that opened onto a steep descending passageway, again packed solid with debris. The workmen have now cleared the passageway down some sixty feet, ex-

POSTSCRIPT

CENTURY'S SON

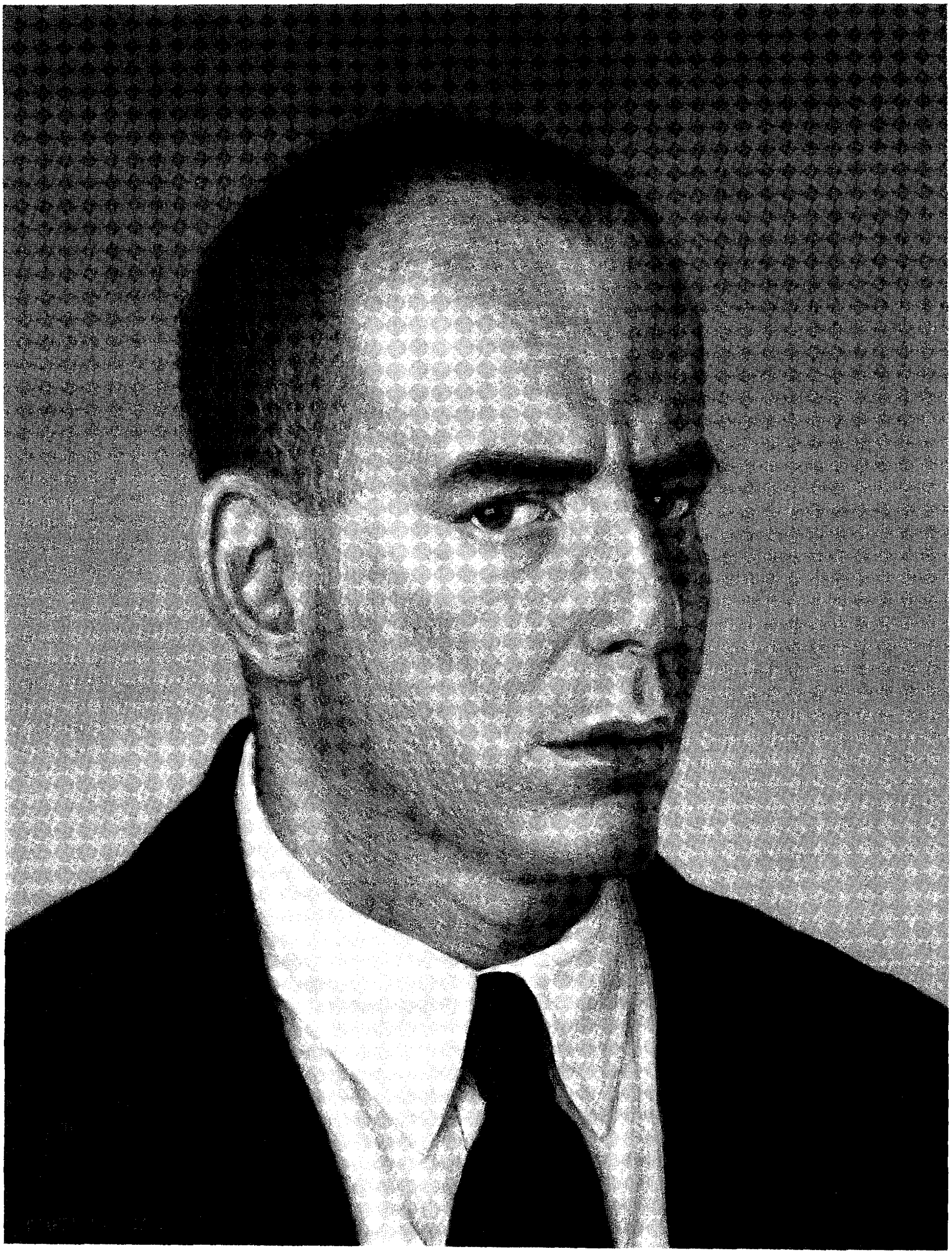
LINCOLN KIRSTEIN, who died peacefully at his home in New York on January 5th, got less attention from the national media than Leon Schwab, of the famous Hollywood drugstore, whose death occurred a few hours earlier. That, as Lincoln would have been the first to observe, was only fair: the dancers, poets, painters, sculptors, photographers, and sundry other arts workers whose careers he sponsored were nobodies compared with the movie stars who were spotted in Schwab's, and Kirstein himself was the biggest nobody of all. An artist who labored consciously and selflessly in behalf of other artists, a visionary who early—Harvard, Class of '30—grasped the opportunities the century offered in abundance to those willing, in his words, to "throw their lives away and find them," Kirstein seemed to many a man of destiny. To himself he was merely an American of means operating in a certain time and place.

The original School of American Ballet, the name stencilled in block letters on the windows, opened over a delicatessen at Madison Avenue and Fifty-ninth Street in 1934, a hundred years after the birth of Degas, painter (and poet) of ballet. The school today, in its lavish headquarters at Lincoln Center, stands as the equivalent of the centuries-old state academies of France and Russia—the symbol of Kirstein's intuition in seeking to transform a quintessentially élitist amusement into a middle-class American pastime. Some will say that he could not have succeeded without George Balanchine; I think he could have, and Balanchine tacitly acknowledged this when, in the last decades of their collaboration, Kirstein took control of the school while Balanchine ran the company it had given rise to, New York City Ballet.

Kirstein leaves no successor. The woods are full of arts patrons and promoters; he was a giant sequoia. He lived to be eighty-eight, vigilant and punctilious to the end, dying only when he knew that the century he had done so much to serve was also breathing its last.

—ARLENE CROCE

JERRY L. THOMPSON/COURTESY ALEXANDRA SCHIERMAN



Portrait of Lincoln Kirstein painted by his wife,
Fidelma Cadmus, in 1941, the year they were married.

posing twelve more side chambers, and are still at work.

We pause at the top of the newly excavated passageway. A dozen screw jacks with timbers hold up its cracked ceiling. The men have finished breakfast and are back at work, one man picking away at the wall of debris at the bottom of the passageway while another scoops the debris into a basket made out of old tires. A line of workmen then pass the basket up the corridor and out of the tomb.

"I've called this passageway 3A," Weeks says. He drops his voice. "The incredible thing is that this corridor is heading toward the tomb of Ramesses himself. If it connects, that will be extraordinary. No two tombs were ever deliberately connected. This tomb just gets curiouser and curiouser."

Ramesses' tomb, lying a hundred feet across the Valley, was also wrecked by flooding and is now being excavated by a French team. "I would dearly love to surprise them," Weeks says. "To pop out one day and say '*Bonjour! C'est moi!*' I'd love to beat the French into their own tomb."

I follow him down the newly discovered corridor, slipping and sliding on the pitched floor. "Of course," he shouts over his shoulder, "the sons might also be buried *underneath* their father! We clearly haven't found the burial chambers yet, and it is my profound hope that one way or another this passageway will take us there."

We come to the end, where the workmen are picking away at the massive wall of dirt that blocks the passage. The forty-two men can remove about nine tons of dirt a day.

At the bottom, Weeks introduces me to a tall, handsome Egyptian with a black mustache and wearing a baseball cap on backward. "This is Muhammad Mahmud," Weeks says. "One of the senior workmen."

I shake his hand. "What do you hope to find down here?"

"Something very nice, *inshallah.*"

"What's in these side rooms?" I ask Weeks. All the doorways are blocked with dirt.

Weeks shrugs. "We haven't been in those rooms yet."

"Would it be possible . . ." I start to ask.

He grins. "You mean, would you like to be the first human being in three thousand years to enter a chamber in an ancient Egyptian tomb? Maybe Saturday."

As we are leaving the tomb, I am struck by the amount of work still unfinished. Weeks has managed to dig out only three rooms completely and clear eight others partway—leaving more than eighty rooms entirely untouched. What treasures lie under five or ten feet of debris in those rooms is anyone's guess. It will take from six to ten more years to clear and stabilize the tomb, and then many more years to publish the findings from it. As we emerge from the darkness, Weeks says, "I know what I'll be doing for the rest of my life."

ONE morning, I find a pudgy, bearded man sitting in the green tent and examining, Hamlet-like, the now assembled skull. He is the paleontologist Elwyn Simons, who has spent decades searching the sands of the Faiyum for primate ancestors of human beings. Susan Weeks once worked for him, and now he is a close friend of the couple, dropping in on occasion to look over bones from the tomb. Kent and Susan are both present, waiting to hear his opinions about the skull's sex. (Only DNA testing can confirm whether it's an actual son of Ramesses, of course.)

Simons rotates the skull, pursing his lips. "Probably a male, because it has fairly pronounced brow ridges," he says. "This"—he points to a hole punched in the top of the cranium—"was made post mortem. You can tell because the edges are sharp and there are no suppressed fractures."

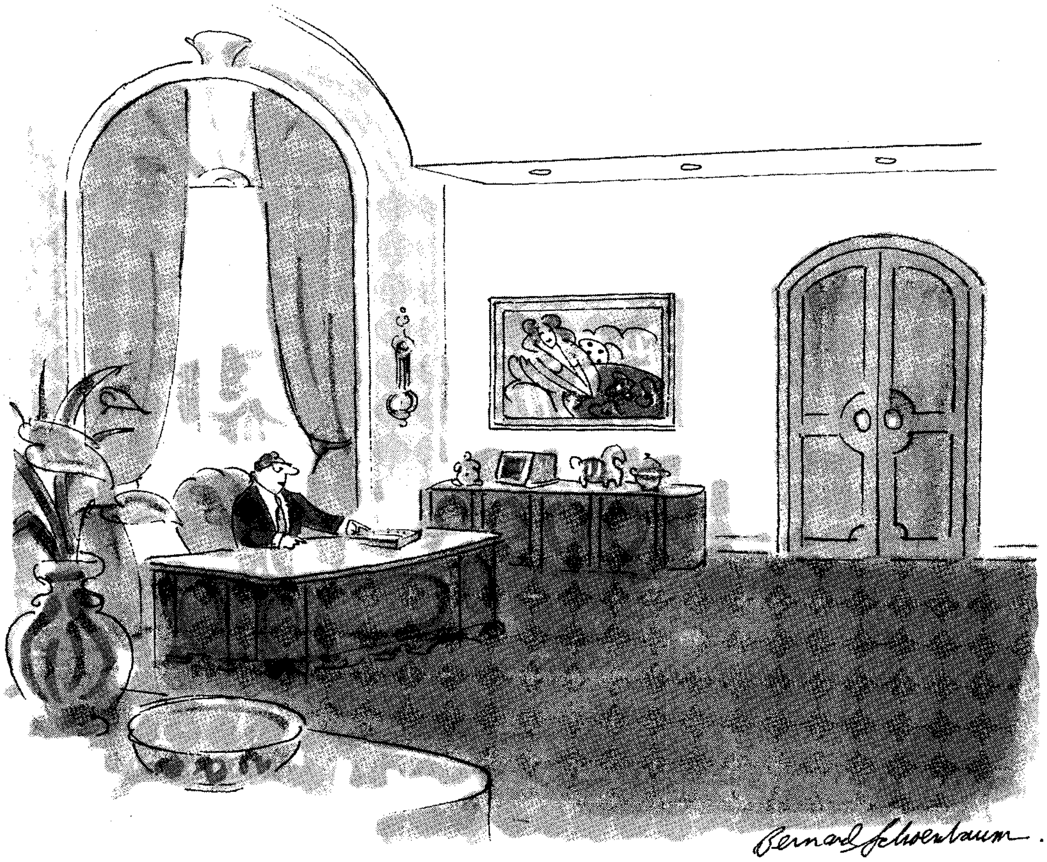
Simons laughs, and sets the skull down. "You can grind this up and put it in your soup, Kent."

When the laughter has died down, I venture that I didn't get the joke.

"In the Middle Ages, people filled bottles with powdered mummies and sold it as medicine," Simons explains.

"Or mummies were burned to power the railroad," Weeks adds. "I don't know how many miles you get per mummy, do you, Elwyn?"

While talk of mummies proceeds, a worker brings a tray of



"Ms. Harmon, send in Mr. Dexter, and tell him he can bring his chair."

UPPER-INCOME FOODS
MIDDLE-INCOME FOODS
LOWER-INCOME FOODS
PET FOODS

tea. Susan Weeks takes the skull away and puts another bone in front of Simons.

"That's the scapula of an artiodactyl. Probably a cow. The camel hadn't reached Egypt by the Nineteenth Dynasty."

The next item is a tooth.

"Artiodactyl again," he says, sipping his tea. "Goat or gazelle."

The identification process goes on.

The many animal bones found in KV5 were probably from offerings for the dead: valley tombs often contained sacrificed bulls, mummified baboons, birds, and cats, as well as steaks and veal chops.

Suddenly, Muhammad appears at the mouth of the tomb. "Please, Dr. Kent," he says, and starts telling Weeks in Arabic that the workers have uncovered something for him to see. Weeks motions for me to follow him into the dim interior. We put on our hard hats and duck through the first chambers into Corridor 3A. A beautiful set of carved limestone steps has appeared where I saw only rubble a few days before. Weeks kneels and brushes the dirt away, excited about the fine workmanship.

Muhammad and Weeks go to inspect another area of the tomb, where fragments of painted and carved plaster are being uncovered. I stay to watch the workmen digging in 3A. After a while, they forget I am there and begin singing, handing the baskets up the long corridor, their bare feet white with dust. A dark hole begins to appear between the top of the debris and the ceiling. It looks as if one could crawl inside and perhaps look farther down the corridor.

"May I take a look in there?" I ask.

One of the workmen hoists me up the wall of dirt, and I lie on my stomach and wriggle into the gap. I recall that archeologists sometimes sent small boys into tombs through holes just like this.

Unfortunately, I am not a small boy, and in my eagerness I find myself thoroughly wedged. It is pitch-black, and I wonder why I thought this would be exciting.

"Pull me out!" I yell.

The Egyptians heave on my legs, and I come sliding down with a shower of dirt. After the laughter subsides, a skinny man named Nubie crawls into the hole. In a moment, he is back out, feet first. He cannot see anything; they need to dig more.

The workmen redouble their efforts, laughing, joking, and singing. Working in KV5 is a coveted job in the surrounding villages; Weeks pays his workmen four hundred Egyptian pounds a month (about a hundred and twenty-five dollars), four times what a junior inspector of antiquities makes and perhaps three times the average monthly income of an Egyptian family. Weeks is well liked by his Egyptian workers, and is constantly bombarded with dinner invitations from even his poorest laborers. While I was there, I attended three of these dinners. The flow of food was limitless, and the conversation competed with the bellowing of a water buffalo in an adjacent room or the braying of a donkey tethered at the door.

After the hole has been widened a bit, Nubie goes up again with a light and comes back down. There is great disappointment: it looks as though the passageway might come to an end. Another step is exposed in the staircase, along with a great deal of broken pottery. Weeks returns and examines the hole himself, without comment.

As the week goes by, more of Corridor 3A is cleared, foot by foot. The staircase in 3A levels out to a finely made floor, more evidence that the corridor merely ends in a small chamber. On Wednesday, however, Weeks emerges from the tomb smiling. "Come," he says.

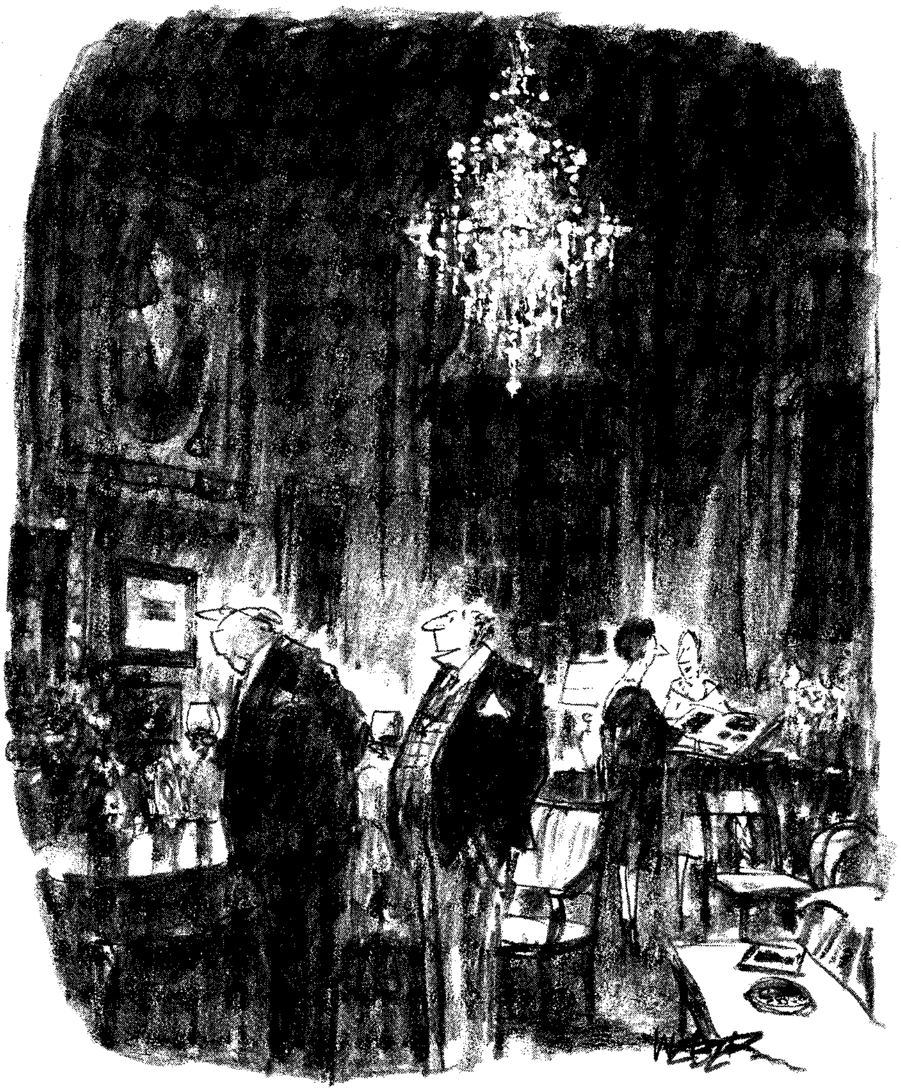
The hole in 3A has now been enlarged to about two feet in diameter. I scramble up the dirt and peer inside with a light, choking on the dust. As before, the chiselled ceiling comes to an abrupt end, but below it lies what looks like a shattered door lintel.

"It's got to be a door," Weeks says, excited. "I'm afraid we're going to have to halt for the season at that doorway. We'll break through next June."

Later, outdoors, I find myself coughing up flecks of mud.

"Tomb cough," Weeks says cheerfully.

On Thursday morning, Weeks is away on business, and I go down into the tomb with Susan. At the bottom of 3A, we stop to watch Ahmed Mahmud Hassan, the chief supervisor



"My first Social Security check."

• •

of the crew, sorting through some loose dirt at floor level. Suddenly, he straightens up, holding a perfect alabaster statuette of a mummy.

"Madame," he says, holding it out.

Susan begins to laugh. "Ahmed, that's beautiful. Did you get that at one of the souvenir stalls?"

"No," he says. "I just found it." He points to the spot. "Here."

She turns to me. "They once put a rubber cobra in here. Everyone was terrified, and Muhammad began beating it with a rock."

"Madame," Ahmed says. "Look, please." By now, he is laughing, too.

"I see it," Susan says. "I hope it wasn't too expensive."

"Madame, please."

Susan takes it, and there is a sudden silence. "It's real," she says quietly.

"This is what I was telling Madame," Ahmed says, still laughing.

Susan slowly turns it over in her hands. "It's beautiful. Let's take it outside."

In the sunlight, the statuette glows. The head and shoulders still have clear traces of black paint, and the eyes look slightly crossed. It is an *ushabti*, a statuette that was buried only with the dead, meant to spare the deceased toil in the afterlife: whenever the deceased was called upon to do work, he would send the *ushabti* in his place.

That morning, the workmen also find in 3A a chunk of stone. Weeks hefts it. "This is very important," he says.

"How?"

"It's a piece of a sidewall of a sarcophagus that probably held one of Ramesses' sons. It's made out of serpentine, a valuable stone in ancient Egypt." He pulls out a tape measure and marks off the thickness of the rim. "It's eight-point-five centimetres, which, doubled, gives seventeen centimetres. Add to that the width of an average pair of human shoulders, and perhaps an inner coffin, and you could not have fitted this sarcophagus through any door to any of the sixty side chambers in that tomb." He pauses. "So, you see, this piece of stone is one more piece of evidence that we have yet to find the burial chambers."

Setting the stone down with a thud on a specimen mat, he dabs his forehead. He proceeds to lay out a theory about KV5. Ramesses had an accomplished son named Khaemwaset, who became the high priest of an important cult that worshipped a god represented by a sacred bull. In Year 16, Khaemwaset began construction of the Serapeum, a vast catacomb for the bulls, in Saqqara. The original design of the Serapeum is the only one that remotely resembles KV5's layout, and it might have been started around the same time. In the Serapeum, there are two levels: an upper level of offering chapels and a lower level for burials. "But," Weeks adds, throwing open his arms, "until we find the burial chambers it's *all* speculation."

On Friday, Bruce Ludwig arrives—a great bear of a man with white hair and a white beard. Dressed like an explorer, he is lugging a backpack full of French wine for the team.

Unlike Lord Carnarvon and other wealthy patrons who funded digs in the Valley of the Kings, Ludwig is a self-made man. His father owned a grocery store in South Dakota called Ludwig's Superette. Bruce Ludwig made his money in California real estate and is now a partner in a firm managing four billion dollars in pension funds. He has been supporting Weeks and the Theban Mapping Project for twelve years.

Over the past three, he has sunk a good deal of his own money into the project and has raised much more among his friends. Nevertheless, the cost of excavation continually threatens to outstrip the funds at hand. "The thing is, it doesn't take a Rockefeller or a Getty to be involved," he told me over a bottle of Château Lynch-Bages. "What I like to do is show other successful people that it won't cost a fortune and that it's just hugely rewarding.

Buildings crumble and fall down, but when you put something in the books, it's there forever."

Ludwig's long-term support paid off last February, when he became one of the first people to crawl into the recesses of KV5. There may be better moments to come. "When I discover that door covered with unbroken Nineteenth Dynasty seals," Weeks told me, joking, "you bet I'll hold off until Bruce can get here."

SATURDAY, the workers' taxi picks the Weekses and me up before sunrise and then winds through a number of small villages, collecting workers as it goes along.

The season is drawing to a close, and Susan and Kent Weeks are both subdued. In the last few weeks, the probable number of rooms in the tomb has increased from sixty-seven to ninety-two, with no end in sight. Everyone is frustrated at having to lock up the tomb now, leaving the doorway at the bottom of 3A sealed, the plaster floor unplumbed, the burial chambers still not found, and so many rooms unexcavated.

Weeks plans to tour the United States lecturing and raising more funds. He estimates that he will need a quarter of a million dollars per year for the indefinite future in order to do the job right.

As we drive alongside sugarcane fields, the sun boils up over the Nile Valley through a screen of palms, burning into the mists lying on the fields. We pass a man driving a donkey cart loaded with tires, and whizz by the Colossi of Memnon, two enormous wrecked statues standing alone in a farmer's field. The taxi begins the climb to a village once famous for tomb robbing, some of whose younger residents now work for Weeks. The houses are completely surrounded by the black pits of tombs. The fragrant smell of dung fires drifts through the rocky streets.

Along the way, I talk with Ahmed, the chief supervisor. A young man with a handsome, aristocratic face, who comes from a prominent family in Gezira Bairat, he has worked for Weeks for about eight years. I ask him how he feels about working in the tomb.

Ahmed thinks for a moment, then says, "I forget myself in this tomb. It is so vast inside."

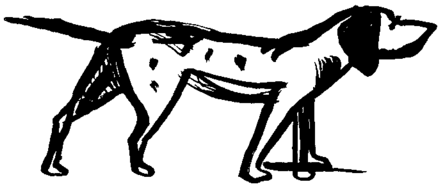
"How so?"

"I feel at home there. I know this thing. I can't express the feeling, but it's not so strange for me to be in this tomb. I feel something in there about myself. I am descended from these people who built this tomb. I can feel their blood is in me."

When we arrive in the Valley of the Kings, an inspector unlocks the metal gate in front of the tomb, and the workers file in, with Weeks leading the way. I wait outside to watch the sunrise. The tourists have not yet arrived, and if you screen out some signs you can imagine the Valley as it might have appeared when the pharaohs were buried here three thousand years ago. (The venders and rest house were moved last year.) As dawn strikes el-Qurn and invades the upper reaches of the canyon walls, a soft, peach-colored light fills the air. The encircling cliffs lock out the sounds of the world; the black doorways of the tombs are like dead eyes staring out; and one of the guard huts of the ancient priests can still be seen perched at the cliff edge. The whole Valley becomes a slowly changing play of light and color, mountain and sky, unfolding in absolute stillness. I am given a brief, shivery insight into the sacredness of this landscape.

At seven, the tourists begin to arrive, and the spell is dispersed. The Valley rumbles to life with the grinding of diesel engines, the frantic expostulations of venders, and the shouting of guides leading groups of tourists. KV5 is the first tomb in the Valley, and the tourists begin gathering at the rope, pointing and taking pictures, while the guides impart the most preposterous misinformation about the tomb: that Ramesses had four hundred sons by only two wives, that there are eight hundred rooms in the tomb, that the greedy Americans are digging for gold but won't find any. Two thousand tourists a day stand outside the entrance to KV5.

I go inside and find Weeks in 3A, supervising the placement of more screw jacks and timbers. When he has finished, he turns to me. "You ready?" He points to the lowest room in 3A. "This looks like a good one for you to explore."



One of the workmen clears away a hole at the top of the blocked door for me to crawl through, and then Muhammad gives me a leg up. I shove a caged light bulb into the hole ahead of me and wriggle through. I can barely fit.

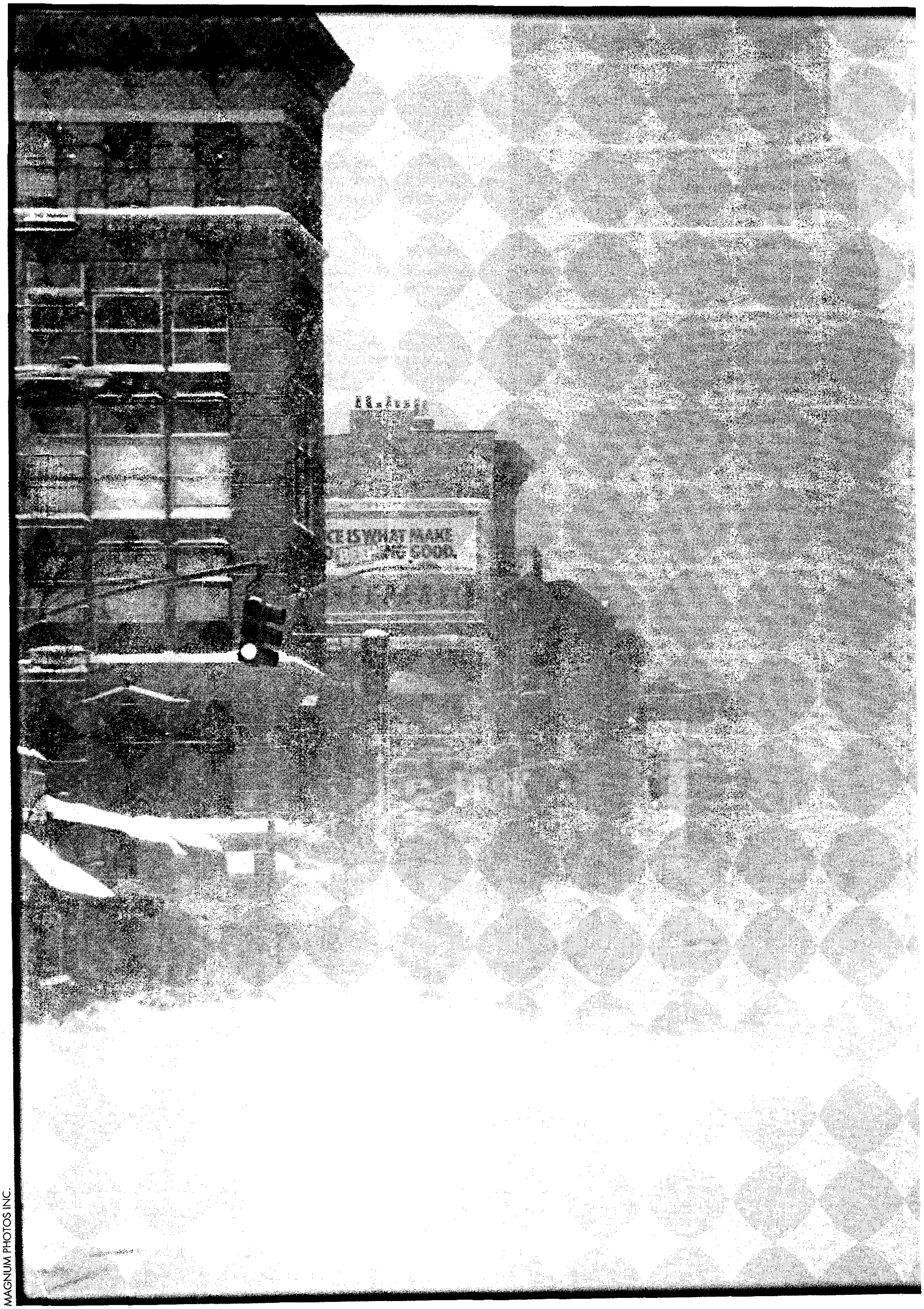
In a moment, I am inside. I sit up and look around, the light throwing my distorted shadow against the wall. There is three feet of space between the top of the debris and the ceiling, just enough for me to crawl around on my hands and knees. The room is about nine feet square, the walls finely chiselled from the bedrock. Coils of dust drift past the light. The air is just breathable.

I run my fingers along the ancient chisel marks, which are as fresh as if they were made yesterday, and I think of the workmen who carved out this room, three millennia ago. Their only source of light would have been the dim illumination from wicks burning in a bowl of oil salted to reduce smoke. There was no way to tell the passage of time in the tomb: the wicks were cut to last eight hours, and when they guttered it meant that the day's work was done. The tombs were carved from the ceiling downward, the workers whacking off flakes of limestone with flint choppers, and then finishing the walls and ceilings with copper chisels and sandstone abrasive. Crouching in the hot stone chamber, I suddenly get a powerful sense of the enormous religious faith of the Egyptians. Nothing less could have motivated an entire society to pound these tombs out of rock.

Much of the Egyptian religion remains a mystery to us. It is full of contradictions, inexplicable rituals, and impenetrable texts. Amid the complexity, one simple fact stands out: it was a great human bargain with death. Almost everything that ancient Egypt has left us—the pyramids, the tombs, the temples—represents an attempt to overcome that awful mystery at the center of all our lives.

A shout brings me back to my senses. "Find anything?" Weeks calls out.

"The room's empty," I say. "There's nothing in here but dust." ♦


CE IS WHAT MAKE
ING GOOD.

MAGNUM PHOTOS INC.

WALKING IN THE CITY: *On Monday, January 8th, pedestrians trudge up Sixth Avenue. Photograph by Gilles Peress.*

A REPORTER AT LARGE

BLIND TRUST

A formidable résumé, a concern for the public interest, a husband running for President—Elizabeth Hanford Dole and Hillary Rodham Clinton have a lot in common. Now Mrs. Dole's former money manager is facing questions about her financial past.

BY JANE MAYER

On the outskirts of a Kansas City suburb called Overland Park, in a forlorn stretch of prairie carved up into office parks and strip-mall developments, sits an unremarkable two-story brick-and-glass office building. The building has an improbably urban-sounding address, 11827 West 112th Street, and an improbable part owner: Elizabeth Hanford Dole.

Mrs. Dole, known as Liddy (the toddler nickname that she coined for herself), is the wife of Senator Bob Dole, of Kansas, the Republican front-runner for the 1996 Presidential nomination. But she is perhaps best known for an impressive résumé she has built on her own, in thirty years in Washington. She heads the American Red Cross, the country's largest charitable organization, and she is the only woman in American history—indeed, one of only a handful of people of either sex—to have held two separate Cabinet posts in different Administrations: Secretary of Transportation under Ronald Reagan and Secretary of Labor under George Bush. She has served as a Federal Trade Commissioner, as a consumer advocate, and as a senior White House official. She has also been mentioned almost quadrennially as a Vice-Presidential candidate.

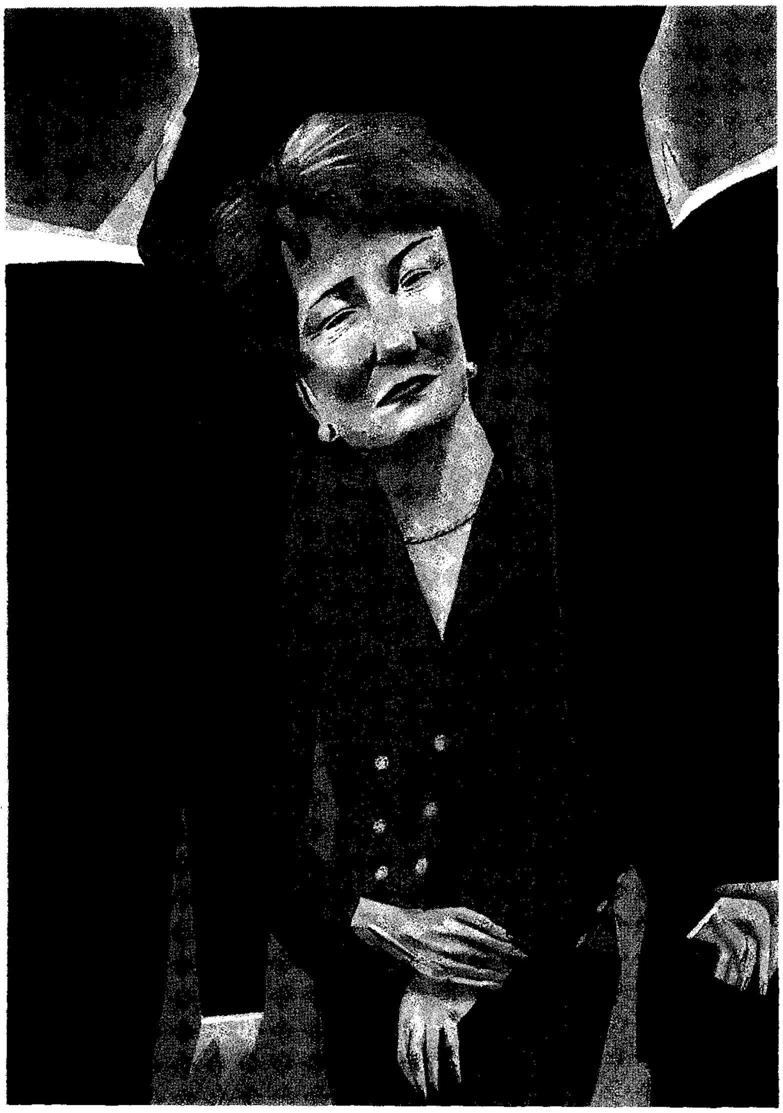
Few who know Mrs. Dole's public record in Washington are familiar with her business investments in Kansas, her husband's home state. Some of these are surprising. For instance, her office building, in Overland Park, is jointly owned with John Palmer, a former aide to her husband who, as an African-American, qualified for a multi-million-dollar minority set-aside contract that the Senator's office pushed through. The Small Business Administration intends such contracts to promote affirmative action for "socially or economically disadvantaged" minorities. Some of the money Palmer earned apparently helped him to finance the joint venture with Mrs. Dole, who profited from it. The deal with Palmer was one of several business transactions for Mrs. Dole that were handled over the years by David C. Owen, who was once her husband's friend and political confidant. That relationship ended when questions about Owen's business practices arose, just before the 1988 Presidential primaries. Those questions led to state and federal investigations, and eventually to Owen's conviction on two counts of tax fraud.

Until recently, few people would have cared about this; no one has accused Mrs. Dole or her husband of breaking any law. But at a time when Hillary Clinton's career as a lawyer in private practice has become the focus of Senate Whitewater investigations—and raised questions about influence peddling, cronyism, and financial favoritism in her husband's home state—Republicans who remain eager to make it a campaign issue may want to shift their focus to something else. If questions can be raised about Mrs. Clinton's financial past and about her candor, they can also be raised about Mrs. Dole's.

Yet Elizabeth Hanford Dole is not likely to become the dartboard that Hillary Rodham Clinton has become. Both women were presidents of their college classes, attended Ivy League law schools, conducted themselves with extraordinary drive and self-discipline, were drawn to public service, found sustenance in Christianity, and, at key points, including this one, have submerged their substantial ambitions into their husband's political careers. Like Mrs. Clinton, Mrs. Dole is undoubtedly as smart and as ambitious as any woman to come within reach of the White House. But, in contrast to Mrs. Clinton, she has also been extraordinarily successful at sidestepping controversy; her toughness has been well hidden behind light laughter, a lilting accent, and the infectiously gracious manner of a Southern belle. "Liddy Dole camouflages the ambition, and somehow seems not to want the power," observes Doris Kearns Goodwin, the author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning account of Eleanor Roosevelt's marriage to Franklin, "No Ordinary Time." Perhaps nothing better reflects the difference between Mrs. Dole's indirect approach and the approach of the more frankly commanding Mrs. Clinton than the respective nicknames the two have won over the years: in school, it is reported, some classmates referred to Hillary Rodham as Sister Frigidaire, while on Capitol Hill Mrs. Dole's ability to sweet-talk congressmen earned her the sobriquet Sugar Lips.

Unlike Bob Dole, who, born in 1923, in Russell, Kansas, grew up so poor that his family was forced at one point to rent out its small house and live in the basement, Elizabeth Dole always had some money. Born in 1936, she was the only daughter of John Hanford, a prosperous florist, and Mary Cathey Hanford, a homemaker, in the small city of Salisbury, North Carolina, and there she was treated to a genteel Southern girlhood. There were weekends at a country house, equestrian instruction, ballet lessons, and, later, débutante balls. Her maternal family name graced a nearby church that her Scots-Irish ancestors had founded, and automatically qualified her for membership in socially exclusive organizations of local prominence, such as the National Society of Colonial Dames of America.

Beautiful, bright, and charming, Liddy Hanford displayed from the start a remarkable talent for getting what she wanted, seemingly without asking for it. By all accounts, she worked extraordinarily hard to excel, yet she came of age in an era when women were not encouraged to display ambition openly. In the class of 1958, at Duke University's women's college, she was both the May Queen and the president of the student body, and she went on to become one of the very few women of that era to attend Harvard Law School. In "The Doles: Unlimited Partners," an autobiography she and her husband wrote for the 1988 campaign, Mrs. Dole tells the story of her rise in Washington as if it were a breathless Nancy Drew adventure, in which her own success is the baffling mystery. For instance, instead of describing her ambitions, she writes about an afternoon during which she and a roommate at Harvard Law School, Jean Eberhart, convinced themselves that they were "on the fringe of spinsterhood," and she goes on to recount, "Finally I put into words the question plaguing us both: 'Do you think *anyone* will take us out, once they learn we're Harvard Law students?' " Jean Eberhart Dubofsky, who is now a Colorado attorney and a former State Supreme Court Justice, says that any fear of spinsterhood was "particularly funny" coming from Liddy. She explains, "I can't emphasize enough how beautiful she was at that point, spectacularly gorgeous, refined, with high cheekbones, and always well dressed." The issue for Elizabeth, suggests Dubofsky, who considered her a great friend, was not finding men but finding exactly the right man. "What I really remember is that back then she wanted to be married to the President of the United States," Dubofsky says. "She was already interested in politics, and she was very conscious of the limits that were placed on women then. She thought that to be successful you'd have to be the wife of the President. . . . When I heard she had married Dole, I thought it was very funny." But also no surprise: "Liddy prepared things so that there would be no surprises. That's the difference between her and other people who appear like her. It may seem effortless, but it's not. She prepares, and prepares, and prepares."



Other political wives have acquired reputations as ideological compasses and pillow-talk advisers, but Mrs. Dole seems to be creating a new role.

MARK ULRIKSEN

Elizabeth Dole has said that Washington attracted her "like a magnet." After graduating from law school, in 1965, she arrived in the capital as an L.B.J. Democrat. Doris Kearns Goodwin, who remembers having dinner with her years ago, when they were both young and single in Washington, recalls her as instantly likable, "energetic, fun, and pretty." But "underneath," she notes, "she's absolutely a pathbreaking career woman." In 1968, she got a job in the White House office of Betty Furness, Johnson's crusading, high-profile consumer advocate, who was then taking on one industry after another. "The irony is that she was a wonderful knee-jerk liberal," the consumer advocate Michael Pertschuk says.

When Richard Nixon took office, in 1969, he put a more conservative woman, Virginia Knauer, in charge of consumer affairs, and Liddy Hanford, to the amazement of her colleagues, contrived to stay on after they had all left. She also switched her party registration from Democrat to Independent. "Whether Elizabeth changed her mind or changed her colors, I don't know," Furness, who has since died, said to the *Washington Monthly* in 1987.

But she had a gift for cultivating strategic allies, and Knauer, who even today says, "She has no faults as far as I'm concerned," was among them. Although Elizabeth has phoned her mother, now ninety-four, almost every day of her adult life, and considers her to be her best friend, Knauer became her surrogate mother and mentor, and engineered the two moves that really launched her in public life: her nomination to the Federal Trade Commission, in 1973, and her introduction to Bob Dole, the year before.

Then forty-nine and the chairman of the Republican National Committee, Dole had recently divorced his first wife—a former nurse, who had not shared his political ambitions. Aware of his eligibility, Knauer arranged a meeting in the Senator's office and brought her protégée along to brief him on a consumer matter. In their book Mrs. Dole writes that she noticed immediately what "an awfully attractive" man the Senator was. But she was seriously involved with someone else, and friends say she had already turned down a number of marriage proposals; she was clearly in no hurry to settle down. Moreover, both she and Dole were busy with their careers. After their first encounter, Dole wrote her name on his blotter, but it took him several months to call her, and several more weeks after that to ask her out. More than three years passed before, at the age of thirty-nine, she married Dole. In doing so, she moved from a small apartment in the expensive Watergate complex into his slightly larger two-bedroom spread, only a few floors away.

THE merging of two such hard-core workaholics has inevitably made for a frenetic life. For an interview recently, Mrs. Dole had her press secretary usher me into her sparely decorated corner office in the Dole campaign headquarters, and I arrived just as the Senator, looking tanned and handsome, was leaning flirtatiously over her chair. Springing upright, as if surprised in an affectionate moment by an unexpected visitor, the Senator backed off to shake hands and then, assuming a somewhat awkward-sounding husbandly tone, asked, in his customarily choppy fashion, "Dinner—tonight—home—O.K.?" In truth, dinners at home are rare in the couple's life. Their schedules, which they fax to each other upon reaching their offices in the morning, frequently keep them apart six days a week. According to a *Newsweek* account, they recently spent their twentieth wedding anniversary in different states, eating takeout food that each had ordered to surprise the other, and talking on the phone. The flap over Hillary Clinton's cookie-baking prowess notwithstanding, Mrs. Dole concedes that while she enjoys "fixing a good meal for my husband" she rarely has the time to do so. "I have more the soul of a short-order cook," she confesses, with a laugh. But although she acknowledges that Sunday afternoons are sometimes the only downtime they can spend with each other, she says, "Our two careers have really enriched our marriage. . . . There's so much to talk about when you're back together."

Like almost everything else in their lives, their marriage had political dimensions. Along with Mrs. Dole's wedding license came another important change: her registration as a member of the Republican Party. According to Tanya Melich, a moderate and a Republican Party official at the time who has written about the role of women in the G.O.P., Elizabeth Hanford's marriage to Bob Dole "was crucial" to her advancement. She had previously had a reputation as a moderate, being known, for instance, as a supporter of the Equal Rights Amendment for women. "But in 1975, just as the right wing was becoming a force, she married a man who was acceptable to the right," Melich says.

By 1980, Elizabeth had managed to win a spot on Ronald Reagan's transition team, but the Party's right wing became something of a hindrance to her. Although she had been discussed as a potential Cabinet member, one of Reagan's powerful financial backers, the conservative brewery magnate Joseph Coors, blackballed her, because he felt that she was too moderate, according to Melich. Reagan instead put Mrs. Dole in charge of his White House public-liaison office. Among other things she did in that post was work to improve her relations with the right. She worked well with anti-abortion and evangelical leaders, including Jerry Falwell, and hired as an assistant Morton Blackwell, a movement conservative whose credentials stretched back to the Goldwater era. She also went from being an advocate of consumer rights to championing the merits of free enterprise. And, in a move that was seen as treasonous by some feminists, she began promoting alternatives to the E.R.A., endorsing instead more moderate measures, such as a review of sexually discriminatory government programs. "Elizabeth proved to the men in those first few years that she could be trusted," Melich says.

By 1983, some of Reagan's top advisers were looking for ways to address the so-called gender gap. At that point, White House Chief of Staff James Baker got the idea of promoting Mrs. Dole to even greater visibility, by naming her Secretary of Transportation. She held that post for the next five years, overseeing the sale of Conrail and successfully casting herself as "the safety Secretary"—an image that survived worsening airline-safety records and her tepid support for automobile air bags. Rather than getting bogged down in administrative details, Mrs. Dole concentrated on the public aspects of the job, displaying a talent for creative publicity. Newspapers showed her waving a "Stop" sign in order to inspect personally her employees' cars for seat belts. Mrs. Dole waged a visible campaign for brake lights to be installed high in the center of every new car, and they are still required. She also became one of the most sought-after speakers in the Administration: her office received approximately six thousand speaking requests a year, and she accepted scores of them.

Within the Department of Transportation, she also won a reputation for demanding a lot of her staff. "She was a perfectionist to the point of paranoia about her public image," a former aide says. "No speech was ever good enough; if she got a ninety-nine-point-five-per-cent great press, she'd focus on the tiny percentage that was negative. She would study, study, study, for everything, memorizing briefing books she had been studying for years. It was really out of the ordinary. It made it unwinnable to work for her." This aide began to suspect that Mrs. Dole's obsession with appearing perfect was related in part to absences in her personal life. With no children of their own, and both of them working equally hard, the couple had so little time together that their chance meeting at benefit dinners became the subject of well-worn jokes. "What I really began to wonder," the aide says, "was, Is she happy doing this?"

Mrs. Dole may have been asking herself the same question, for at about this time she underwent what she describes as a profound Christian reawakening. In a sermon she delivered recently in Orlando, she said, "I was blessed with a beautiful marriage, a challenging career, but only gradually did I realize what I was missing: my life was threatened with spiritual starvation. . . . My career became of paramount importance. I worked very hard to excel . . . which is all well and good, but I'm inclined to be a perfectionist, and it's very hard, you know, to control everything. . . . In my case it began crowding everything else out."

Mrs. Dole has written and spoken extensively about this period of her life. She found a pastor, joined a prayer group, and has been studying the Bible and praying daily ever since. Even now, on the campaign, she tries to stop for at least half an hour each day to read the Scriptures. Aides suggest that she frequently prays before making major decisions.

"It's made a huge difference in her public life—in making all the decisions she's had to, she's been able to go directly to God," Edward Bauman, a Methodist minister who helped renew Mrs. Dole's Christianity, says. Indeed, she has seen her work, both in government and now at the Red Cross, as a "mission." During her stint at the Labor Department, she made safety in the workplace something of a crusade. And while some labor leaders initially grumbled about her failure to intervene in the Eastern Airlines strike, she won praise from both unions and management for her help in settling the Pittston Company coal strike. At the Red Cross, she has thrown herself with evangelical fervor into insuring the safety of the nation's blood supply, about half of which is provided by the Red Cross. She has implemented a new national computer network to centralize information about the availability of all blood types and to guarantee their safety in the age of AIDS. And, although she has been criticized for what some saw as a judgmental tone in Red Cross AIDS materials, and has upset some civil libertarians by calling for wider AIDS testing, many others have praised her efforts. "I think Mrs. Dole has been the most impressive head of the Red Cross we've seen," says Shepherd Smith, a co-founder of Americans for a Sound AIDS/H.I.V. Policy and a conservative Christian advocate. "Virtually no other leaders I can think of have had the courage to do what they knew was right—they instead bowed to the politically correct." On top of this workload, Mrs. Dole has volunteered in recent years at a Christian senior center, holding birthday parties, among other activities, for the low-income elderly. "It's not a façade with Mrs. Dole," Elizabeth O'Connor, who founded the senior center, Sarah's Circle, says. "She's deeply committed to the spiritual journey."

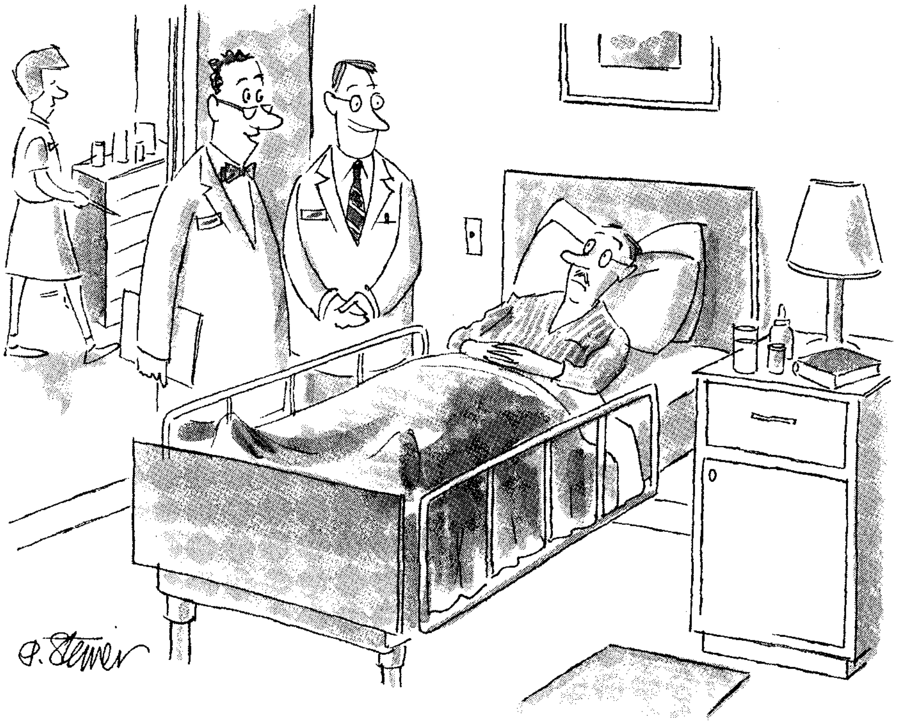
In a recent interview, Mrs. Dole confessed that even with this new focus she hasn't entirely conquered her urge to control the rest of life's details. Dressed in Christmas red, with lipstick to match, accompanied by her most trusted aide, communications director Mari Maseng Will, and carefully tape-recording her own words, she said, "I seem to be doing it again. . . . It's a matter of waking up at five in the morning and making lists." Indeed, she evinced her greatest excitement in describing a pen she had recently found in New Hampshire which has a built-in flashlight. "Now I can lean over the side of the bed while Bob is snoring away and make my lists in the middle of the night without waking him up!" she said.

Mrs. Dole resists the idea that she and Hillary Clinton have much in common. And she says pointedly that if her husband is elected "I would not be a co-President. First Ladies are not elected, they're not appointed, and they're not confirmed." Staying with her job at the Red Cross, she says, "is a way for me to continue what's important to my career." Asked if she sees any similarities between her own finances and Hillary Clinton's involvement in the so-called Whitewater affair, Mrs. Dole says flatly, "No." In fact, she says, she has never paid much attention to her own investments, which she says she has chosen on three occasions to place in blind trusts. "I'd say it would be an extreme opposite to be conducting your own cattle-future trades," Will says. "It's exactly the reverse," Mrs. Dole agrees. "With a blind trust, you don't have any involvement at all."

At the time that Elizabeth Hanford married Bob Dole, in 1975, she had indeed voluntarily placed her modest but comfortable personal holdings in a blind trust. Because she was at the time a Federal Trade Commissioner, overseeing myriad businesses, the trust was meant to shield her from any accusations of impropriety. When the trust was dissolved, in 1978, following her resignation from the F.T.C. in order to help with her husband's first Presidential campaign, its value was placed, in accordance with the broad categories used on federal financial-disclosure forms, at somewhere between a hundred thousand and two hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

By 1985, Mrs. Dole, by then the Secretary of Transportation, placed her holdings for the second time in a blind trust; by then, its net worth had grown significantly, to a million two hundred and forty thousand dollars. Much of this amount, according to her brother John Hanford, reflected payments from the estate of their father, who had died in 1978. And over the next three years, with David Owen as the trust's investment adviser, it grew more, so that by January of 1988, when, in the midst of her husband's second Presidential quest, this trust was opened, its worth was placed at a million six hundred and seventy thousand dollars.

In late 1987, a Kansas newsman named Dale Goter had begun to raise questions about Owen's campaign fund-raising, which eventually led to questions about Mrs. Dole's trust. The question briefly became an issue in the Republican Presidential primaries in early 1988, after George Bush's campaign seized on the news stories in an effort to upset Dole. Bush's aides now admit that they had no idea whether there was anything



"We'll be performing the operation using original instruments."

amiss in Mrs. Dole's financial past, but the line of inquiry served its purpose: it provoked Dole's legendarily dark temper. Within hours after the Bush campaign began raising questions about "cronyism" and about Mrs. Dole's finances, that January, Senator Dole stormed onto the Senate floor and confronted the Vice-President, demanding that Bush "apologize to Elizabeth."

REUNION BETWEEN PLANES

I'm the old school friend
swooping out of the sky
like a Halloween witch
in my Hollywood shades
and my stretchable wig
and a girdle of groans.
Since we shrieked our goodbyes
in a shower of rice
my babies have grown beards
been jailed and divorced.
My husband the broker
embezzled, absconded,
is living abroad with
a kennel of bitches.
I remember your dad
who fondled our bottoms
your mom with her bottle
she hid in the sofa.
My God, they were younger
by decades than we are
crossing into the dusk
of this terminal bar.

—Virginia Hamilton Adair

No apologies were offered, and within a few weeks it scarcely mattered. By mid-February, Bush had beaten Dole in the New Hampshire primary, and any curiosity about Mrs. Dole's finances was buried along with her husband's Presidential hopes. The question was forgotten almost everywhere, except in one corner of Kansas. That is where Owen has been dealing with the repercussions ever since. For years, Owen has kept silent about his relationship with the Doles, but last month he agreed to speak about it in depth for the first time.

For two decades, Dave Owen was as close as Bob Dole ever came to having a friend in Kansas. Owen served as the state's lieutenant governor from 1973 to 1975, and as head of the Kansas Republican Party between 1983 and 1985, becoming one of the most powerful political figures in the state. He is a tall, gray-haired fifty-seven-year-old with the lanky frame of the star basketball player he was in college. Today he works for the Kansas City branch of Stephens Inc., an influential Arkansas investment-banking company. His Overland Park office is impeccable—and quiet; the phone almost never rings. And no political mementos are on display. Instead, he keeps a hand-tooled Western saddle in the corner, a testimony to his many years as a professional rodeo cowboy and also a subject of jokes among friends, who have suggested that when Owen linked his fate to that of Bob Dole, eventually becoming the investment adviser in charge of Elizabeth Dole's trust, he most definitely roped the wrong calf.

Much has changed in Owen's life since early 1988. At the time, Owen had become general finance chairman of Dole's latest Presidential campaign—a position that reflected his role in Dole's life as his most trusted operative. As Dole's top fund-raiser in Kansas, no one enjoyed the Senator's reflected power more, or knew more about the intersection between money and influence inside the Dole state machine. Today, though, Owen is a convicted felon, and an angry man. In October of 1994, he emerged from Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary after having been sentenced to serve a year and a day on two federal-income-tax-fraud charges resulting from investigations that were initially spurred by the 1988 campaign.

From the very beginning of Owen's legal problems, both Doles severed all ties. As soon as questions were raised in January of 1988 about his handling of Mrs. Dole's trust and other financial matters, Owen says he was cut off, eventually resigning just before being fired. He had already resigned—under pressure, according to Mrs. Dole's legal spokesman—as investment adviser to Mrs. Dole's trust. Owen says that although the two men had spoken almost every night during many of Dole's campaigns over the previous twenty years, frequently met and travelled together, and even shared a few of Dole's rare social moments, Senator Dole didn't speak to him in person at that time. Nor, according to Owen, has the Senator spoken to him since, although Mrs. Dole has called a few times to offer her sympathies.

Dole's campaign spokesman at the time of the firing, Walt Riker, explained that because Mrs. Dole's trust was blind neither the candidate nor his wife had any inkling of what Owen was doing with her money. And, concerning any other financial trouble Owen found himself in, Riker said, "It has nothing to do with us. . . . It's out of our loop." Senator Dole himself said, "There's nothing there. Dave Owen may have a problem, but that's his problem." Owen's version of his longtime financial association with Elizabeth and Bob Dole is different. "I was made a scapegoat for Dole," he said recently. "He decided to wash his hands totally of me so that any problems that arose were mine, not his. He totally deflected questions about himself by focussing attention on me. It became the safest thing for the leading Republican politicians in Kansas to see me totally destroyed so that no more connections could be made between them and me. That's true of Bob Dole," he added, choosing his words carefully. "He betrayed me."

Owen does not deny that Mrs. Dole's trust was blind—that, as the Doles and their spokesmen have stated, they had no knowledge of the investments he made on behalf of the trust—but he claims that, beyond the trust, Mrs. Dole had far more of a business relationship with him than her professions of ignorance suggest. Owen also claims that the financial infractions that eventually resulted in his imprisonment were simply part of the ordinary way politics were played in Kansas for many years. "I thought I was doing what Dole wanted," he says.

At the beginning of their association, Owen was certainly doing what Dole wanted. His help became crucial in 1974, during Dole's second Senate race—a difficult contest, in which he faced a popular Kansas obstetrician, a Democratic congressman named Bill Roy. Dole had first won election to the House of Representatives in 1960, and to the Senate in 1968, but this race—in the year when the Watergate scandals ended a number of Republican careers—marked a turning point in his political life. During the campaign, he attacked Roy, who was ahead almost until the end, for having performed abortions. Owen, who was lieutenant governor at the time and had decided not to seek reëlection, was Dole's campaign chairman. What he delivered to Dole was the money and voting power of the state's wealthiest and most densely populated district, Johnson County, which borders Kansas City. It was Owen's home turf, and he had it organized down to the precinct level. In the end, Dole won by a mere two per cent of the vote. "Most people in Kansas would say that if I hadn't got involved, he wouldn't have won," Owen says. Roy, who is now retired in Topeka, agrees, and adds that from that point on "Owen and Dole were like hand in glove."

In 1976, when Gerald Ford chose Dole as his running mate, Owen, who was a member of the Kansas delegation to the G.O.P. Convention, helped promote him, and subsequently took charge of the Washington office of the Vice-Presidential campaign. When Dole decided to seek the Republican Presidential nomination in 1980, only to be quickly overwhelmed by Ronald Reagan, Owen was again by his side, also serving as his campaign manager and chief fund-raiser in his Senate race that year. Owen says that money has never been important to Dole as an end in itself, but that it was an overriding concern as a means of furthering his political ambitions. During campaigns, Owen says, Dole called the campaign treasurer every night to find out how much had come in, and from whom. "He knew all the names, and followed it very closely," Owen says.

Within a few years of the Senator's marriage to Elizabeth, in 1975, Owen began to get involved in her financial affairs as well. In retrospect, the relationship was fraught with conflicts of interest. Owen was by then a private financier in Kansas, with numerous ventures subject to state and federal regulation. He was also a power broker, who charged clients for his expertise and his access. On several occasions, these advantages seemed to consist chiefly of access to Bob Dole.

Dole says she has no knowledge of her financial dealings with Owen because, for the most part, they were in a blind trust. Owen says, and documents confirm, that it was in 1979, a half-dozen years before the second blind trust was set up, that he and Mrs. Dole were beginning their financial association. "I was already in a position of being an adviser, helping her with her personal investments. We were friends," Owen says. Whether that friendship with an influential ally of her husband's resulted in her getting special breaks—and financial opportunities unavailable to ordinary citizens—is a question that was never fully answered in Dole's 1988 Presidential campaign. The parallels are inexact, but it is the sort of question that has dogged Hillary Clinton.

In late 1979, a time when Dole's first Presidential campaign was short of cash, Owen had become chairman and president of the State Bank of Stanley. In that capacity, he arranged a fifty-thousand-dollar loan to Mrs. Dole at a per cent and a half below the going prime interest rate—an arrangement which he highlighted in writing to the Dole campaign. Mrs. Dole then lent the money to her husband's campaign. Owen now maintains that the below-prime interest rate did not constitute financial favoritism, but the transaction also raised election-law questions. If Mrs. Dole's assets were legally her own, she should have been limited to giving a thousand dollars of her money, like any other campaign contributor.

For that reason, in late 1980 the Federal Election Commission initiated an investigation of the loan, and found "reason to believe that [Mrs. Dole] made a contribution to the [campaign] in excess of the contribution limit," "in violation" of campaign law. At the time, Dole protested that his wife's assets were jointly held, but that position was contradicted last month by Mrs. Dole's legal adviser, Bob Davis, who said that her assets have been kept separate from her

"You're thinking computer nerd, right? Actually, I don't know diddly about computers."

husband's throughout her marriage. At the time, the F.E.C. filed no charges. Frank Reiche, the head of the F.E.C. then, found Dole's reasoning dubious, but judged the violation "at most inadvertent." He also conceded that "the applicable law is sufficiently ambiguous and the probability of succeeding in court sufficiently hazardous to suggest that no further action be taken."

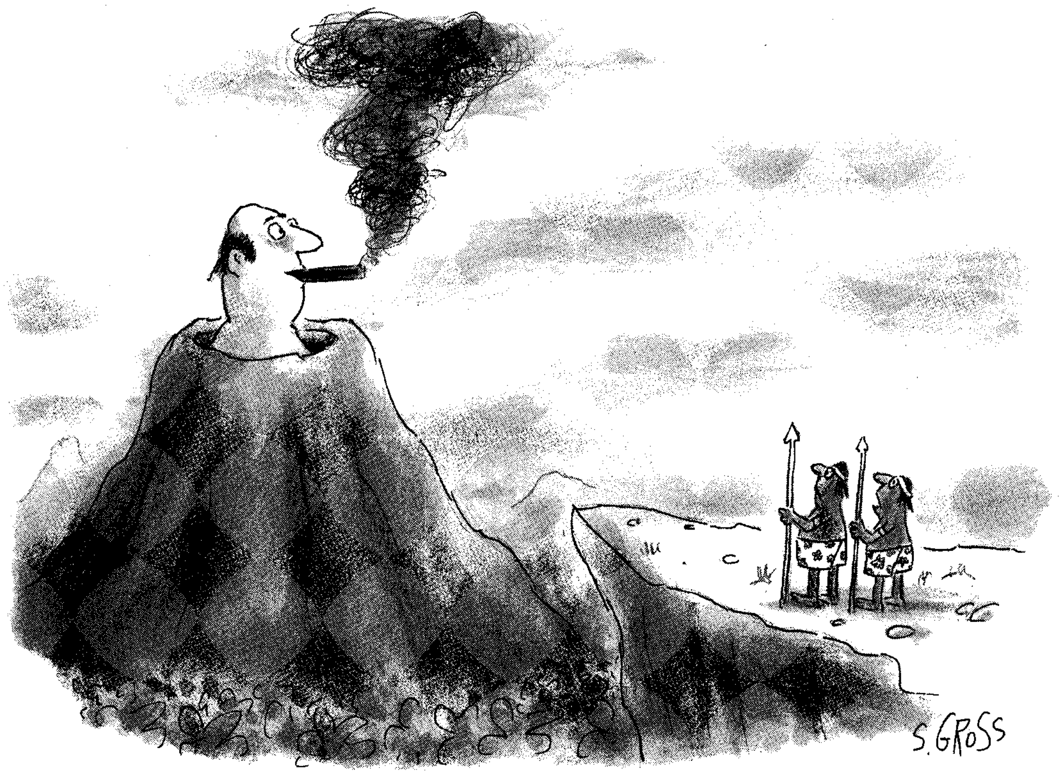
Through all this, Owen remained a close friend. He was good at making money, and, perhaps more important, it appears that he may have provided Mrs. Dole with a financial safety net that was unavailable to less well-connected clients. For instance, in 1983, when she was a senior official in the Reagan Administration, Owen launched a venture called Golfun Productions, to produce a syndicated television show in which celebrities shared their golf tips. Golfun was a financial disaster, declared insolvent by 1985. Yet unlike other backers in the company Mrs. Dole not only did not lose money on Golfun but actually made money on it. Records show that in February of 1984 she put two hundred and fifty thousand dollars of her own money into Golfun in the form of a personal loan to the company. The following December, Owen arranged to pay her the first of several installments of interest on the loan—twenty-three thousand five hundred and seventy dollars. At the time, the company was on the brink of bankruptcy, yet Owen managed to pledge the firm's accounts receivable as collateral for a loan made to the company by a bank to which he had ties. He then used that loan to pay back Mrs. Dole. In later years, Owen made additional payments to Mrs. Dole from his own pocket, so that by 1988 she had not only recouped her principal but had also earned an additional seventy-one thousand dollars in interest.

In contrast, Thomas Saul, a Kansas contractor who invested in Golfun, says he lost more than a hundred thousand dollars. "I'd like to know why she got her money back and I didn't," he said recently when he was asked about this. He wonders how Owen could have pledged company assets to get a loan to pay back Mrs. Dole, since, as he put it, "the business had no assets."

Owen says that Mrs. Dole was treated differently because she came into the venture on different terms. He says her money was a personal loan to the company, so she was indemnified differently. For her part, Mrs. Dole says she has no recollection of Golfun at all. "I frankly didn't have much time to oversee investments, either then or now. My life is very, very hectic." Owen, however, says, "The fact of the matter is that prior to this blind trust, she personally was notified every month of every transaction—it was sent to her. I presume she read the statements, because questions were raised by her from time to time—we had discussions about it."

Who picked Owen to be the trust's investment adviser is curiously contested. Mrs. Dole says that Owen was chosen by Mark McConaghy, a principal at Price Waterhouse, who had worked with her husband on congressional tax issues and who was named as the official trustee. McConaghy, whose firm occasionally works with Senator Dole, declines to confirm or deny Mrs. Dole's account. But sources familiar with his role say that McConaghy did not meet Owen until Mrs. Dole presented the Kansan to him as her investment adviser. Owen says that Mrs. Dole's account is "just not true. Elizabeth asked me to do it." She did so, he says, because they already had a successful financial relationship. For instance, in addition to the Golfun deal he had helped her put money into a real-estate partnership called AlTenn, which served as a tax shelter. "I had invested well for her," Owen says, "and she was very thankful for that."

In theory, Owen's very existence protected the Doles from any charges that they might have faced concerning conflicts between their public work and their private finances. In reality, Owen's closeness to the Doles made that separation far more complicated. For instance, in 1986 Dole helped lead the effort to reform the federal tax code. As Senate Majority Leader, and former Finance Committee chairman, he was a central figure in closing thousands of loopholes in order to bring down tax rates. One of the few businesses that succeeded in retaining its status as a tax shelter was a kind of life-insurance policy known as a "single premium" policy and the related "single premium" annuity: the tax-reform law created a windfall for the companies that sold such policies and annuities. And one of these was the American Investors Life Insurance Company of Topeka, Kansas. Between 1985 and 1987, after the Tax Reform Act passed, the



"I now believe in God."

company's assets more than quadrupled—largely from sales of its tax-sheltered single-premium life-insurance policies and annuities—from a hundred and twenty-nine million dollars to six hundred and sixty million.

Owen and Mrs. Dole's trust were at the center of this particular intersection of commerce and politics. As Congress began weighing its sensitive tax legislation, the parent company, AmVestors Financial Corporation, put Owen on its board; he stayed for less than a year. In this capacity, he says he spoke with Dole frequently about preserving the tax shelter, and Dole came to the company's offices in Topeka to talk further about it. "Everyone understood what was going on," Owen says. Then, in July of 1986, two months before the Tax Reform Act passed, Owen bought for Mrs. Dole's trust several thousand shares of AmVestors stock. The exact sum he paid for it is unclear from financial-disclosure forms, but it appears to have been worth between five thousand and fifteen thousand dollars. By the time he sold it for Mrs. Dole, the following year, it appears to have made her a decent profit, having gone for somewhere between fifteen thousand and fifty thousand dollars according to the broad categories on the disclosure forms.

Owen says he doubts that either the Senator or his wife knew he was buying stock in the company for the trust. Mrs. Dole says that she had no idea what trades Owen was making on her behalf. This follows the law of blind trusts as dictated by the Office of Government Ethics, allowing the Doles to argue with accuracy that they broke no law. Still, by acting as an outsider while actually being a legislative insider, Owen enabled Mrs. Dole to profit from a loophole opened in part by her husband.

THIS convergence of interests was also evident in the purchase of the Overland Park office: in January, 1986, Mrs. Dole's trust, under Owen's direction, bought the newly built brick-and-glass building for a million three hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Eleven months later, on December 30, 1986, Mrs. Dole's trust sold half the building to a company called EDP Enterprises, realizing a gain for her trust of sixty-three thousand one hundred and eighty-two dollars. The partnership buying the building consisted of two entities: Elizabeth Dole and a company called EDP Enterprises.

EDP was formed by John Palmer, the entrepreneur who had been a field officer for Dole from 1980 to 1982. Dole's office had persistently lobbied the Small Business Administration to award a twenty-six-million-dollar no-bid contract to Palmer, enabling him to prepare and serve the food at the Army's mess halls at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. It was the largest food-service contract ever awarded by the S.B.A., and that fact is made all the more remarkable because Palmer was reported to have had minimal experience in the field. At the time of the award, he had already been turned down twice for S.B.A. accreditation.

Palmer has not returned telephone calls, but it appears that by 1986 his company was doing well enough to look for real-estate investments. Palmer's offices were already situated in the building that Mrs. Dole's trust owned, and so Owen, who was close to Palmer, says it made sense for Palmer to form a partnership with her trust to buy the premises. The timing was advantageous to Mrs. Dole, because by selling the building the trust was able to realize a gain two days before the capital-gains-tax rate was due to increase. To help facilitate the transaction, Mrs. Dole's trust actually lent Palmer two hundred and seventy-nine thousand dollars of the necessary money, at eleven-per-cent interest. The title was then turned over to a partnership formed by EDP and the trust.

In 1988, the Bush campaign raised questions about the S.B.A. grant to Palmer. The House Small Business Committee then undertook a preliminary investigation. The committee chairman—John J. LaFalce, a New York Democrat—declared that the awarding of the contract was "replete with appearances of improper activities," and he forwarded the investigatory file to the Justice Department for possible criminal prosecution. "However," LaFalce said, "I have found nothing that suggests any U.S. Senator was personally involved in any questionable event or occurrence." The referral from LaFalce came in the same month that Dole was defeated in New Hampshire. After that, no more was heard of any criminal charges. Similarly, the Office of Government Ethics found no evidence of wrongdoing.

Owen, too, had managed to profit handsomely from the federal minority contract. Although Dole did not realize it when his office helped Palmer get the contract, Owen had signed on as a "consultant" to Palmer and was paid a hundred and forty-nine thousand dollars for his help with the venture. It was a similar consulting job that eventually landed Owen in prison. In 1986, he was paid a hundred-thousand-dollar fee by an Alabama racetrack developer—Paul Bryant, Jr., who is the son of the legendary football coach Bear Bryant—for his efforts in obtaining a license to build a racetrack in Kansas. According to Bryant, it was Senator Dole who had steered him to Owen.

Also in 1986, Owen says, Dole was pressuring him to raise money for Mike Hayden, a Kansas gubernatorial candidate whom Owen disliked. Although Owen says the task was "noxious" to him, he complied. In just six days that fall, he raised thirty-five thousand dollars for Hayden. But according to the Kansas Public Disclosure Commission, all but three thousand dollars of these contributions were illegal. The commission alleged that Owen had inappropriately directed the funds, channelling some of them through five companies to which he had links, including EDP Enterprises. These companies, and individuals working for them, the commission charged, then gave the money in legal-sized donations to the Hayden campaign.

Owen managed to get most of the eighteen counts against him dismissed, eventually pleading guilty to a misdemeanor and paying a fine. Palmer, who pleaded no contest, paid a fine as well. But while these campaign infractions resulted in barely a slap on the wrist, they served to bring Owen to the attention of federal authorities, who then charged him with misreporting on his income taxes the hundred thousand dollars he was paid by Bryant.

Today, Owen maintains his innocence. Moreover, he says that there was no difference in the way he raised funds for Hayden from the way he and others had raised funds countless times in the past for other candidates. For this reason he blames Senator Dole and other former political colleagues for not speaking up on his behalf. "It was standard operating procedure for years," Owen says of the practice of having linked corporate entities, controlled by the same person, giving separate campaign contributions. But he says that, because of his potential for damaging Dole during the last campaign, "he fed me to the wolves." "I'm a political victim," he insists. "I've had my life ruined over politics."

THESE days, Mrs. Dole evidently hopes to minimize her association with Owen, and invokes ignorance of her finances. Sitting crosswise in a tastefully covered wing chair in her office, and smiling warmly, she makes an inquisitor feel churlish for even asking about them. "I just don't know anything about it, because it was a blind trust," she says repeatedly to any questions about her finances. Her answers are careful, but they overlook the financial investments she entered into with Owen before the trust was set up, and those which she continued to hold for years after its dissolution.

When asked about her partnership with Palmer, Mrs. Dole says she can recall no details of it whatsoever, including whether they continue to own the building together. "I'm in a blind trust again," she explains. "I just don't know what's happened to Overland Park." But financial records show that since 1986 she has been in business with Palmer, who still holds the federal contract, and who is a contributor to the Dole Presidential campaign. This information has been readily available to her for years, because her holdings were open for almost eight years since 1988, after the Dole campaign released them in an effort to put all such questions to rest. Later, Mari Maseng Will telephoned to say that Mrs. Dole "can't speak to the details of investments that Owen was handling for her thirteen years ago. Finances have just not been an area in which she has had a high level of interest. That's why she had an investment adviser."

It is Mrs. Dole's misfortune—as it has been Mrs. Clinton's—to live in a political era in which the benefit of the doubt is no longer an entitlement. Forty years ago, Lady Bird Johnson was able to build a substantial fortune in broadcasting, an area of economic activity in which government influence was paramount; she and her husband, who like Bob Dole was a Senate Majority Leader with Presidential ambitions, enjoyed benefits and paid no political price for them. The intervening decades have made the public far more suspicious and have laid a formidable array of traps for politicians and their families. Campaign-finance laws, whatever they have done or failed to do in the way of curbing the influence of special-interest money, have created tangles of rules that are tempting to evade and easy to get snared in. And the press and public are less forgiving than ever before about political families that benefit from the kinds of financial transactions, however legal, that are unavailable to ordinary citizens. When the private financial life of one member of a political couple is mingled with the other member's public influence, both spouses can expect highly intrusive scrutiny—especially at the Presidential or would-be Presidential level.

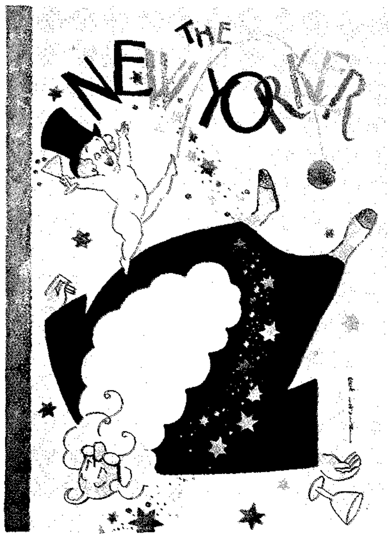
Other modern political wives have acquired reputations as watchdogs, ideological compasses, and pillow-talk advisers, but in many ways Mrs. Dole seems to be creating a new role—less that of a private sounding board to her husband than that of a public saleswoman for him. By many accounts, she is better at promoting Senator Dole than he is at promoting himself. She has often repeated anecdotes about the Senator's struggle to overcome nearly fatal war wounds, about how they met, and about the esteem he has won from his Senate colleagues, usually employing the same words. But if such repetitions bore her she shows no signs of it. Instead, she has prepared carefully for the challenge. She has taken a yearlong leave of absence from the Red Cross and studied videotapes from her husband's most recent Presidential bid. And she has again sealed her financial holdings, last month creating another blind trust.

If all goes according to plan, next year the Doles may for the first time in their married life live like many other couples in a place they picked together, a place that Mrs. Dole has had her eye on since law school. The family's friend and informal adviser Bob Ellsworth says, "I think they'd like to move into the White House. There is no doubt they want this—both of them—through and through." ♦

AT THE GALLERIES

REA IRVIN

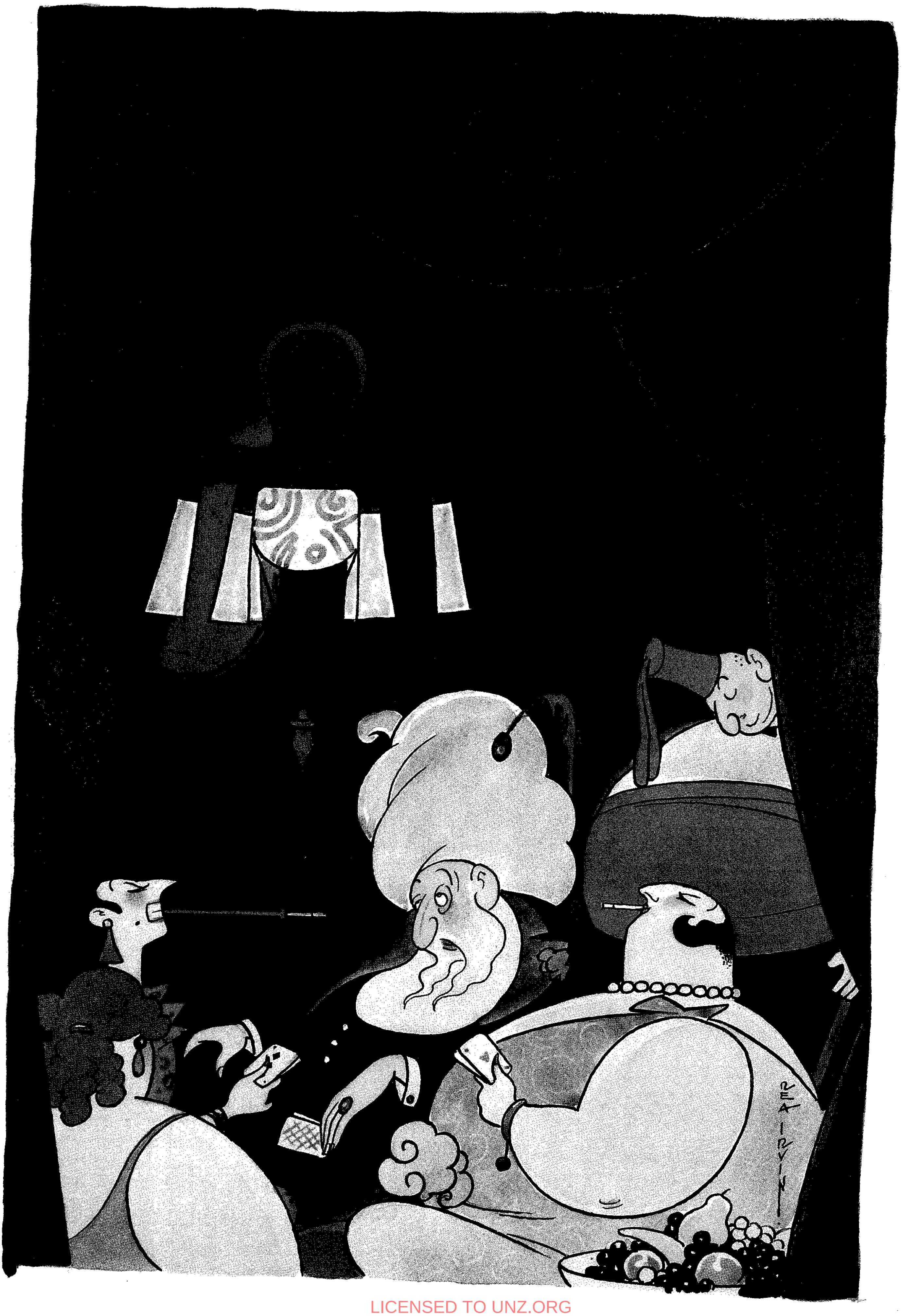
THE crucial role of *The New Yorker's* first art editor, Rea Irvin, in the magazine's history was acknowledged by Harold Ross at the outset, when he declared his desire to "get the prose of the magazine like the art." Irvin selected the body type, designed fonts and logos for the headings, and chose the spot drawings that punctuated the text. In addition, he introduced the unsophisticated Ross to the most sophisticated artists of the day and persuaded him to publish their work.



Ironically, Irvin's success as Ross's Virgil has overshadowed what he considered the more important aspect of his career: his achievement as an artist. A show that includes some eighty of his works, at the Museum of the City of New York from January 24th to May 5th, provides a rare opportunity to savor that achievement. Among its delights are the cover for January 2, 1932 (above), and "The Card Game" (c. 1935), a cover that never ran.

Irvin, like Ross, started in newspapers, and was an exceptionally versatile draftsman, producing spots, satiric drawings, spreads, caricatures, and covers. All are notable for their sinuous line and their exquisitely balanced composition. Irvin was a naturally sunny spirit, and his art evokes a world of confidence and gaiety, where one could enjoy, as he did, a fine cigar, a game of billiards, and the satisfaction of practicing a difficult craft extremely well.

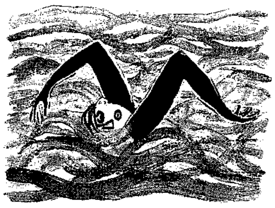
—Lee Lorenz


REA IRVIN

FICTION

THE FALLS

BY GEORGE SAUNDERS



MORSE found it nerve-racking to cross the St. Jude grounds just as the school was being dismissed, because he felt that if he smiled at the uniformed Catholic children they might think he was a wacko or pervert and if he didn't smile they might think he was an old grouch made bitter by the world, which surely, he felt, by certain yardsticks, he was. Sometimes he wasn't entirely sure that he wasn't even a wacko of sorts, although certainly he wasn't a pervert. Of that he was certain. Or relatively certain. Being overly certain, he was relatively sure, was what eventually made one a wacko. So humility was the thing, he thought, arranging his face into what he thought would pass for the expression of a man thinking fondly of his own youth, a face devoid of wackiness or perversion, humility was the thing.

The school sat among maples on a hillside that sloped down to the wide Taganac River, which narrowed and picked up speed and crashed over Bryce Falls a mile downstream near Morse's small rental house, his embarrassingly small rental house, actually, which nevertheless was the best he could do and for which he knew he should be grateful, although at times he wasn't a bit grateful and wondered where he'd gone wrong, although at other times he was quite pleased with the crooked little blue shack covered with peeling lead paint and felt great pity for the poor stiffs renting hazardous shitholes even smaller than his hazardous shithole, which was how he felt now as he came down into the bright sunlight and continued his pleasant walk home along the green river lined with expensive mansions whose owners he deeply resented.

Morse was tall and thin and as gray and sepulchral as a church about to be condemned. His pants were too short, and his face periodically broke into a tense, involuntary grin that quickly receded, as if he had just suffered a sharp pain. At work he was known to punctuate his conversations with brief wild laughs and gusts of inchoate enthusiasm and subsequent embarrassment, expressed by a sudden plunging of his hands into his pockets, after which he would yank his hands out of his pockets, too ashamed of his own shame to stand there merely grimacing for even an instant longer.

From behind him on the path came a series of arrhythmic whacking steps. He glanced back to find Aldo Cummings, an odd duck who, though nearly forty, still lived with his mother. Cummings didn't work and had his bangs cut straight across and wore gym shorts even in the dead of winter. Morse hoped Cummings wouldn't collar him. When Cummings didn't collar him, and in fact passed by without even returning his nervous, self-effacing grin, Morse felt guilty for having suspected Cummings of wanting to collar him, then miffed that Cummings, who collared even the city-hall cleaning staff, hadn't tried to collar him. Had he done something to offend Cummings? It worried him that Cummings might not like him, and it worried him that he was worried about whether a nut like Cummings liked him. Was he some kind of worry-wart? It worried him. Why should he be worried when all he was doing was going home to enjoy his beautiful children without a care in the world, although on the other hand there was Robert's piano recital, which was sure to be a disaster, since Robert never practiced and they had no piano and weren't even sure where or when the recital was and Annie, God bless her, had eaten the cardboard keyboard he'd made for Robert to practice on. When he got home he would make Robert a new cardboard keyboard and beg him to practice. He might even order him to practice. He might even order him to make his own cardboard keyboard, then practice, although this was unlikely, because when he became forceful with Robert, Robert blubbered, and Morse loved Robert so much he couldn't stand to see him blubbering, although if he didn't become forceful with Robert, Robert tended to lie on his bed with his baseball glove over his face.

Good God, but life could be less than easy, not that he was unaware that it could certainly be a lot worse, but to go about in such a state, pulse high, face red, worried sick that someone would notice how nervous one was, was certainly less than ideal, and he felt sure that his body was secreting all kinds of harmful chemicals and that the more he worried about the harmful chemicals the faster they were pouring out of wherever it was they came from.

When he got home, he would sit on the steps and enjoy a few minutes of centered breathing while reciting his mantra, which was "calm down calm down," before the kids came running out and grabbed his legs and sometimes even bit him quite hard in their excitement and Ruth came out to remind him in an angry tone that he wasn't the only one who'd worked all day, and as he walked he gazed out at the beautiful Taganac in an effort to absorb something of her serenity but instead found himself obsessing about the faulty latch on the gate, which theoretically could allow Annie to toddle out of the yard and into the river, and he pictured himself weeping on the shore, and to eradicate this thought started manically whistling "The Stars and Stripes Forever," while slapping his hands against his sides.

CUMMINGS bobbed past the restored gristmill, pleased at having so decisively snubbed Morse, a smug member of the power élite in this conspiratorial Village, one of the league of oppressive oppressors who wouldn't know the lot of the struggling artist if the lot of the struggling artist came up with great and beleaguered dignity and bit him on the polyester ass. Over the Pine Street bridge was a fat cloud. To an interviewer in his head, Cummings said he felt the possible rain made the fine bright day even finer and brighter because of the possibility of its loss. The possibility of its ephemeral loss. The ephemeral loss of the day to the fleeting passages of time. Preening time. Preening nascent time, the blackguard.

FILIP PAGOWSKI

Time made wastrels of us all, did it not, with its gaunt cheeks and its tombly reverberations and its admonishing glances with bony fingers. Bony fingers pointed as if in admonishment, as if to say, "I admonish you to recall your own eventual nascent death, which being on its way is forthcoming. Forthcoming, mortal coil, and don't think its ghastly pall won't settle on your furrowed brow, *pronto*, once I select your fated number from my very dusty book with this selfsame bony finger with which I'm pointing at you now, you vanity of vanities, you luster, you shirker of duties as you shuffle after your worldly pleasure centers."

That was some good stuff, if only he could remember it through the rest of his stroll and the coming storm, to scrawl in a passionate hand in his yellow pad. He thought with longing ardor of his blank yellow pad, he thought. He thought with longing ardor of his blank yellow pad on which, this selfsame day, his fame would be wrought, no, on which, this selfsame day, the first meagre scrawlings which would presage his nascent burgeoning fame would be wrought, or rather writ, and someday someone would dig up his yellow pad and virtually cry eureka when they realized what a teeming fragment of minutiae, and yet crucial minutiae, had been found, and wouldn't all kinds of literary women in short black jackets want to meet him then!

In the future he must always remember to bring his pad everywhere.

THE town had spent a mint on the riverfront, and now the burbling, smashing Taganac ran past a nail salon in a restored gristmill and a café in a former coal tower and a quaint public square where some high-school boys with odd haircuts were trying to kick a soccer ball into the partly open window of a parked Colt with a joy so belligerent and obnoxious that it seemed they believed themselves the first boys ever to walk the face of the earth, which Morse found worrisome. What if Annie grew up and brought one of these freaks home? Not one of these exact freaks, of course, since they were approximately fifteen years her senior, although it was possible that at twenty she could bring home one of these exact freaks, who would then be approximately thirty-five, albeit over Morse's dead body, although in his heart he knew he wouldn't make a stink about it even if she did bring home one of the freaky snots who had just succeeded in kicking the ball into the Colt and were now jumping around joyfully bumping their bare chests together while grunting like walruses, and in fact he knew perfectly well that, rather than expel the thirty-five-year-old freak from his home, he would likely offer him coffee or a soft drink in an attempt to dissuade him from corrupting Annie, who for God's sake was just a baby, because Morse knew very well the kind of man he was at heart, timid of conflict, conciliatory to a fault, pathetically gullible, and with a pang he remembered Len Beck, who senior year had tricked him into painting his ass blue. If there had actually been a secret Blue-Asser's Club, if the ass-painting had in fact been required for membership, it would have been bad enough, but to find out on the eve of one's prom that one had painted one's ass blue simply for the amusement of a clique of unfeeling swimmers who subsequently supplied certain photographs to one's prom date, that was too much, and he had been glad, quite glad actually, at least at first, when Beck, drunk, had tried and failed to swim to Foley's Snag and been swept over the Falls in the dark of night, the great tragedy of their senior year, a tragedy that had mercifully eclipsed Morse's blue ass in the class's collective memory.

Two red-headed girls sailed by in a green canoe, drifting with the current. They yelled something to him, and he waved. Had they yelled something insulting? Certainly it was possible. Certainly today's children had no respect for authority, although one had to admit there was always Ben Akbar, their neighbor, a little Pakistani genius who sometimes made Morse look askance at Robert. Ben was an all-state cellist, on the wrestling team, who was unfailingly sweet to smaller kids and tole-painted and could do a one-handed pushup. Ah, Ben Shmen, Morse thought, ten Bens weren't worth a single Robert, although he couldn't think of one area in which Robert was superior or even equal to Ben, the little smarty-pants, although certainly he had nothing against Ben, Ben being a mere boy, but if Ben thought for a minute that his being more accomplished and friendly and talented than Robert somehow entitled him to lord it over Robert, Ben had another think coming, not that Ben had ever actually lorded it over Robert. On the contrary, Robert often lorded it over Ben, or tried to, although he always failed, because Ben was too sharp to be taken in by a little con man like Robert, and Morse's face reddened at the realization that he had just characterized his own son as a con man.

Boy, oh boy, could life be a torture. Could life ever force a fellow into a strange, dark place from which he found himself doing graceless, unforgivable things like casting aspersions on his beloved firstborn. If only he could escape BlasCorp and do something significant, such as discovering a critical vaccine. But it was too late, and he had never been good at biology and in fact had flunked it twice. But some kind of moment in the sun would certainly not be unwelcome. If only he could be a tortured prisoner of war who not only refused to talk but led the other prisoners in rousing hymns at great personal risk. If only he could witness an actual miracle or save the President from an assassin or win the Lotto and give it all to charity. If only he could be part of some great historical event like the codgers he saw on PBS who had been slugged in the Haymarket Riot or known Medgar Evers or lost beatific mothers on the Titanic. His childhood dreams had been so bright, he had hoped for so much, it couldn't be true that he was a nobody, although, on the other hand, what kind of somebody spends the best years of his life swearing at a photocopier? Not that he was complaining. Not that he was unaware he had plenty to be thankful for. He loved his children. He loved the way Ruth looked in bed by candlelight when he had wedged the laundry basket against the door that wouldn't shut because the house was settling alarmingly, loved the face she made when he entered her, loved the way she made light of the blue-ass story, although he didn't particularly love the way she sometimes trotted it out when they were fighting—for example, on the dreadful night when the piano had been repossessed—or the way she blamed his passivity for their poverty within earshot of the kids or the fact that at the height of her infatuation with Robert's karate instructor, Master Li, she had been dragging Robert to class as often as six times a week, the poor little exhausted guy, but the point was, in spite of certain difficulties he truly loved Ruth. So what if their bodies were failing and fattening and they undressed in the dark and Robert admired strapping athletes on televi-

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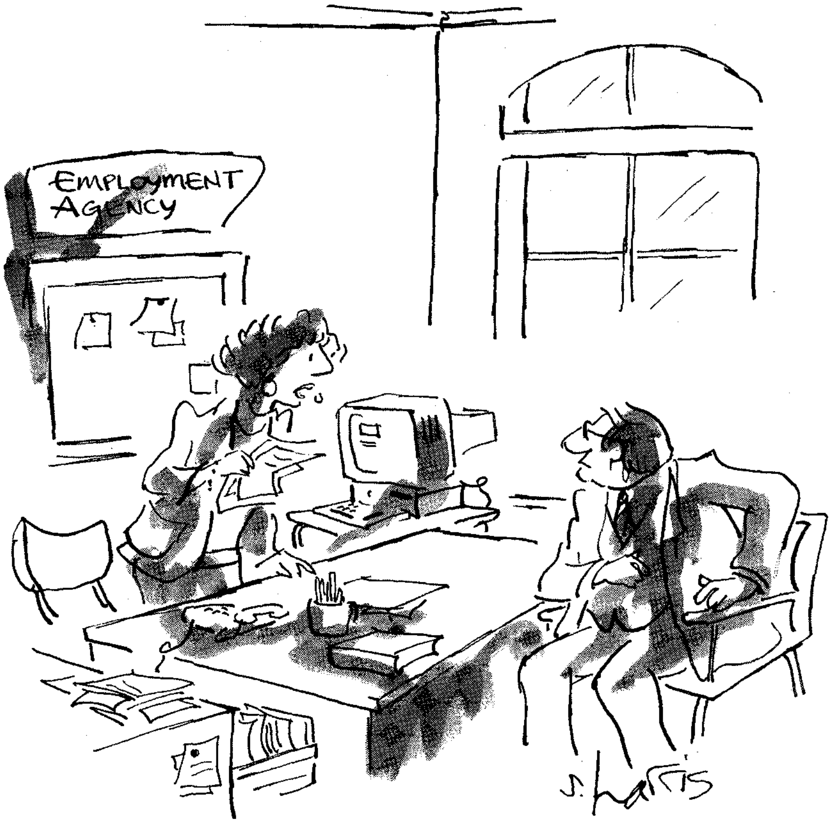
sion while looking askance at Morse's rounded, pimpled back? It didn't matter, because someday, when Robert had a rounded, pimpled back of his own, he would appreciate his father, who had subjugated his petty personal desires for the good of his family, although, God willing, Robert would have a decent career by then and could afford to join a gym and see a dermatologist.

And Morse stopped in his tracks, wondering what in the world two little girls were doing alone in a canoe speeding toward the Falls, apparently oarless.

CUMMINGS walked along, gazing into a mythic dusky arboreal Wood that put him in mind of the archetypal vision he had numbered 114 in his "Book of Archetypal Visions," on which Mom that nitwit had recently spilled grape pop. Vision 114 concerned standing on the edge of an ancient dense Wood at twilight, with the safe harbor of one's abode behind and the deep Wild ahead, replete with dark fearsome bears looming from albeit dingy covens. What would that twitching nervous wage slave Morse think if he were to dip his dim brow into the heady brew that was the "Archetypal Visions"? Morse, ha, Cummings thought, I'm glad I'm not Morse, a dullard in corporate pants trudging home to his threadbare brats in the gathering loam, born, like the rest of his ilk with their feet of clay thrust down the maw of conventionality, content to cheerfully work lemminglike in moribund cubicles while comparing their stocks and bonds between bouts of tedious lawnmowing, then chortling while holding their suckling brats to the Nintendo breast. That was a powerful image, Cummings thought, one that he might develop some brooding night into a herculean prome that some Hollywood smoothie would eat like a hotcake, so he could buy Mom a Lexus and go with someone leggy and blowsy to Paris after taking some time to build up his body with arm curls so as to captivate her physically as well as mentally, and in Paris the leggy girl, in perhaps tight leather pants, would sit on an old-time bed with a beautiful shawl or blanket around her shoulders and gaze at him with doe eyes as he stood on the balcony brooding about the Parisian rain and so forth, and wouldn't Morse and his ilk stew in considerable juice when he sent home a postcard just to be nice!

And wouldn't the Village fall before



"It appears you're a bit overqualified to be exploited but somewhat underqualified to exploit others."

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THE PORCELAIN COUPLE

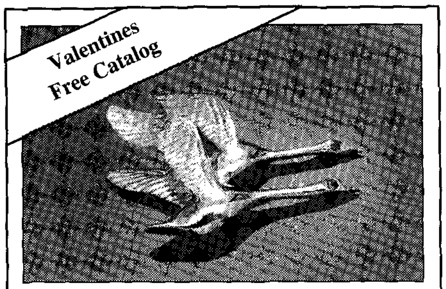
When Jane felt well enough for me to leave her
for a whole day, I drove south by the river
to empty my mother Lucy's house in Connecticut.
I hurried from room to room, cellar to attic,
opening a crammed closet, then turning
to discover a chest with five full drawers.
I labelled for shipping sofas and chairs,
bedroom sets, and tables; I wrapped figurines
and fancy teacups in paper, preserving things
she cherished—and dreaded, in her last years,
might go for a nickel on the Spring Glen lawn.
Everywhere I looked I saw shelves and tabletops
covered with Lucy's glass animals and music boxes.
Everywhere in closets, decades of dresses hung
in dead air. I carried garbage bags in one hand,
and with the other swept my mother's leftover
possessions into sacks for the Hamden dump.
I stuffed bags full of blouses, handkerchiefs,
and the green-gold dress she wore to Bermuda.
At the last moment I discovered and saved
a cut-glass tumbler, stained red at the top,
Lucy 1905 scripted on the stain. In the garage
I piled the clanking bags, then drove four hours
north with my hands tight on the Honda's wheel,
drank a beer looking through Saturday's mail,
pitched into bed beside Jane fitfully asleep,
and woke exhausted from rolling unendable
nightmares of traffic and fire. In my dreams
I grieved or mourned interchangeably for Lucy,
for Lucy's things, for Jane, and for me.
When I woke, I rose as if from a drunken sleep
after looting a city and burning its temples.
All day as I ate lunch or counted out pills,
or as we lay weeping, hugging in bed together,
I counted precious things from our twenty years:
a blue vase, a candelabrum Jane carried on her lap
from the Baja, and the small porcelain box
from France I found under the tree one Christmas
where a couple in relief stretch out asleep,
like a catafalque, on the pastel double bed
of the box's top, both wearing pretty nightcaps.

—DONALD HALL

him on repentant knees when T-shirts imprinted with his hard-won visage, his heraldic leonine visage, one might say, were available to all at the five-and-dime and he held court on the porch in a white Whitmanesque suit while Mom hovered behind him getting everything wrong about his work and proffering inane snacks to his manifold admirers, and wouldn't revenge be sweet when such former football players as Ned Wentz began begging him for lessons in the sonnet? And all that was required for these things to come to pass was some paper and pens and a quixotic blathering talent the likes of which would not be seen again soon, the critics would write, all of which he had in spades, and he rounded the last bend before the Falls, euphoric with his own possibilities, and saw a canoe the color of summer leaves ram the steep upstream wall of the Snag. The girls inside were thrown forward and shrieked with open mouths over frothing waves that would not let them be heard as the boat split open along some kind of seam and began taking on water in doomful fast quantities. Cummings stood stunned, his body electrified, hairs standing up on the back of his craning neck, thinking, I must do something, their faces are bloody, but what, such fast cold water, still I must do something, and he stumbled over the berm uncertainly, looking for help but finding only a farm field of tall dry corn.

MORSE began to run. In all probability this was silly. In all probability the girls were safe onshore, or, if not, help was already on its way, although certainly it was possible that the girls were not safe onshore and help was not on its way, and in fact it was even possible that the help that was on its way was him, which was worrisome, because he had never been good under pressure and in a crisis often stood mentally debating possible options with his mouth hanging open. Come to think of it, it was possible, even probable, that the boat had already gone over the Falls or hit the Snag. He remembered the crew of the barge Fat Chance, rescued via rope bridge in the early Carter years. He hoped several sweaty, decisive men were already on the scene and that one of them would send him off to make a phone call, although what if on the way he forgot the phone number and had to go back and ask the sweaty decisive man to repeat it? And what if this failure got back to Ruth and she was filled with shame and divorced him and forbade him to see the kids, who didn't want to see him anyway because he was such a panicky screwup? This was certainly not positive thinking. This was certainly an example of predestining failure via negativity. Because, who could tell, maybe he would stand in line assisting the decisive men and incur a nasty rope burn and go home a hero wearing a bandage, which might cause Ruth to regard him in a more favorable sexual light, and they would stay up all night celebrating his new manhood and exchanging sweet words between bouts of energetic lovemaking, although what kind of thing was that to be thinking at a time like this, with children's lives at stake? He was bad, that was for sure. There wasn't an earnest bone in his body. Other people were simpler and looked at the world with clearer eyes, but he was self-absorbed and insincere and mucked everything up, and he hoped this wasn't one more thing he was destined to muck up, because mucking up a rescue was altogether different from forgetting to mail out the invitations to your son's birthday party, which he had recently done, although certainly they had spent a small fortune rectifying the situation, stopping just short of putting an actual pony on Visa, but the point was, this was serious and he had to bear down. And throwing his thin legs out ahead of him, awkwardly bent at the waist, shirttails trailing behind and bum knee hurting, he remonstrated with himself to put aside all self-doubt and negativity and prepare to assist the decisive men in whatever way he could once he had rounded the bend and assessed the situation.

But when he rounded the bend and assessed the situation, he found no rope bridge or decisive men, only a canoe coming apart at the base of the Snag and two small girls in matching sweaters trying to bail with a bait bucket. What to do? This was a shocker. Go for help? Sprint to the Outlet Mall and call 911 from Knife World? There was no time. The canoe was sinking before his eyes. The girls would be drowned before he reached Route 8. Could one swim to the Snag? Certainly one could not. No one ever had. Was he a good swimmer? He was mediocre at best. Therefore he would have to run for help. But running was futile. Because there was no time. He had just decided that. And swimming was out of the question. Therefore the girls would die. They were basically dead. Although that couldn't be. That was too sad. What would become of the mother who this morning had dressed them in matching sweaters? How would she cope? Soon her girls would be nude and bruised and dead on a table. It was unthinkable. He thought of Robert nude and bruised and dead on a table. What to do? He fiercely wished himself elsewhere. The girls saw him now and with their hands appeared to be trying to explain that they would be dead soon. My God, did they think he was blind? Did they think he was stupid? Was he their father? Did they think he was Christ? They were dead. They were frantic, calling out to him, but they were dead, as dead as the ancient dead, and he was alive, he was needed at home, it was a no-brainer, no one could possibly blame him for this one, and making a low sound of despair in his throat he kicked off his loafers and threw his long ugly body out across the water. ◆



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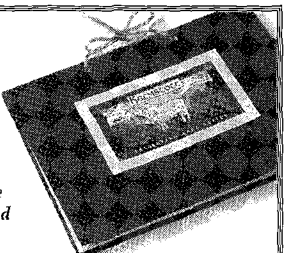

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BOOKS

WAR STORIES

What Booker Prize winner Pat Barker sees in soldiers.

BY BLAKE MORRISON

One of the most fascinating figures of the First World War was a man who never saw action at all. W. H. R. Rivers worked as a psychiatrist at Craiglockhart Military Hospital, in Edinburgh, where his patients were officers sent home from the front suffering from shell shock. Their symptoms included nightmares, mutism, immobility, insomnia, anxiety, and depression brought about by a sense of having failed to be "real men." An early British devotee of Freud, Rivers encouraged his patients to talk about their traumas—not an easy task, since many were repressed products of the English public-school system. He was, until his early death, in 1922, therapist and surrogate father to a generation of troubled, often brilliant minds, Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, and Wilfred Owen among them. But his role in the war was a highly ambiguous one. However benevolent, he was part of the military machine. His job was to get these chaps fighting-fit again. Once cured, they would return to the war in France, where many of them would die.

Until recently, Rivers appeared only as a footnote in the history of the Great War. But a fine trilogy of novels by the British writer Pat Barker—"Regeneration" (1991), "The Eye in the Door" (1993), and now "The Ghost Road"—gives him pride of place. The trilogy is his story; Rivers, as it were, runs through it, and Barker even goes back to the source, with glimpses of his childhood (Charles Dodgson, a.k.a. Lewis Carroll, was a family friend) and of his prewar anthropological work in Melanesia. Each volume discloses new layers of his life and psyche.

To explore these, Barker is forced to invent. Not that she tampers with the facts: on the contrary, they become a shaping spirit, the sometimes inconvenient truths she has to abide by. But she does invent a consciousness for Rivers—a deep-flowing and somewhat turbulent one. And she also invents a patient for him: Billy Prior, a chippy, bisexual, working-class officer, "a little, spitting, sharp-boned alley cat," who needles his stammering mentor. Pat Barker respects Rivers, but she loves Prior. His energy, particularly his sexual energy, is what makes the trilogy more than mere "historical fiction." Through him, Pat Barker presents the First World War as the test tube of the modern spirit.

Barker's trilogy has been enthusiastically received in Britain, where "The Ghost Road" reached the top of the best-seller lists and, in November, won the Booker Prize, the country's leading fiction award. To her surprise and even irritation, Barker seems to have caught a mood of nostalgia. Last year marked the fiftieth anniversary of V-E Day, the end of the Second World War in Europe, and though her trilogy is set during an earlier war, and demolishes many cherished myths, it has tapped some commemorative need.

The trilogy represents a departure for Barker, a brusque, levelheaded woman of fifty-two, who lives in the northern cathedral town of Durham, and whom I talked to last month. Until recently, she was regarded as an uncompromising, working-class regionalist—the sort of writer reviewers use the word "gritty" about. Her first three novels, published by the feminist press Virago in the nineteen-eighties, were all set in the present-day North of England and told the stories of women on the social and economic margins. She seemed to have a kind of agenda, and it didn't include dead white European males.

One clue to her transformation lies in her short, slight, little-known fourth novel, "The Man Who Wasn't There," which tells the story of a boy obsessed with his missing father. Twelve-year-old Colin, told only that his dad died during the Second World War, and deprived of hard evidence about him, imagines him as a cinematic war hero—imagines him so vividly that he becomes "real." "The Man Who Wasn't There" is about the legacy of war. It is also about inventing fathers.

The significance of this theme for Pat Barker lies in the circumstances of her early life. She was born in Thornaby-on-Tees, near the northeast industrial town of Middlesbrough, in 1943. Her mother, Moyra, then twenty-six, was unmarried and had become pregnant as a result of an affair she had while in the WRENS (the Women's Royal Naval Service). Moyra had been happy as a WREN, and resented the pregnancy, because it meant having to leave the service. On three occasions, she tried to abort the baby; she also considered adoption, but her mother refused to countenance it.

To this day, Barker does not know who her father was. When she was young, she was given to understand that he was an R.A.F. pilot who did not survive the war. As late as 1983, in a biographical note accompanying an extract from her work in the magazine *Granta*, she wrote that her "father was killed in action during World War Two." This was her mother's favorite version of events, but there were others. In "The Century's Daughter" (1986), Barker's third novel, the twelve-year-old war child Kath finally summons the nerve to ask her mother (now married to another man) what happened to her father. This is how she later reports the conversation to her grandmother Liza:

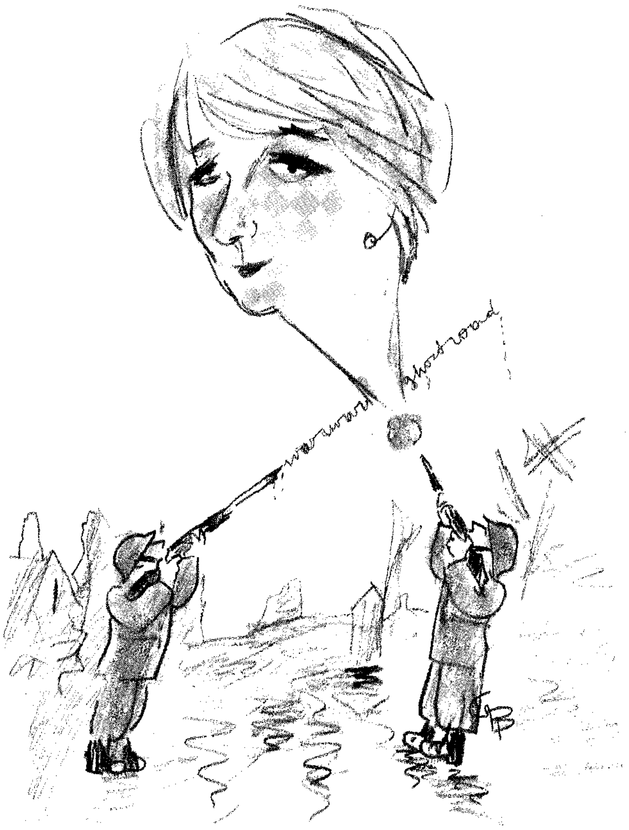
> "Oh, and I found out about me Dad."
> "She *told* you?"
> "Not who he was. Where he's buried."
> Liza stared. "First I knew he was dead."
> "He's underneath the hedge at the bottom of the back garden. Dad killed him, and they buried him together. On their wedding night."

Barker herself was told this same story, and was young enough at the time to believe it. Later, she came to realize that her father might be alive, but, she says, "it's psychologically true that he was dead, so I've never really wanted to know the facts."

Barker describes the early part of her life, spent on a chicken farm, as “blissful.” She grew up calling her mother Moyra (“It wasn’t that I was deceived, but there was something of big sister and little sister in the atmosphere”), while her grandmother did most of the parenting. The fourth member of the household was her grandfather, or step-grandfather (her grandmother’s second husband), who had served as batman to Lord Lascelles during the First World War and was lucky to survive after being bayonetted by a German soldier and left on the field of battle for twelve hours. Thirty years later, he still had a two-inch bayonet wound in his stomach, into which his step-grandchild was sometimes encouraged to insert her hand. Journalists have been quick to seize on this wound as the source of Barker’s obsession with the First World War, and she clearly enjoyed a direct physical access denied to most children born in 1943. Yet she herself is skeptical. “I always tell this story to students in creative-writing courses to illustrate how great anecdotes aren’t necessarily usable or authentic,” she says. “To me it’s a story that has a built-in yuck factor—golden-haired little girl slips her hand inside the Christ-like wound of her dear grandpa—which unless you’re a Tolstoy you can’t overcome. In fact, seeing my grandfather’s balls when he was getting washed made a much greater impression on me.”

When Barker was seven, Moyra married and moved out, leaving her daughter behind, because there was no room at the new address—the back room of a pub. The grandparents were soon running a fish-and-chip shop, and the child, helping to serve customers or watchful behind the counter, would hear the kind of gossip and spicy vernacular that she would go on to use in her early fiction. One opinion she heard expressed concerned the mutual hostility of the sexes. In “Regeneration,” she writes, “In *her* world, men loved women as the fox loves the hare. And women loved men as the tapeworm loves the gut.”

There weren’t many books in the house as Barker was growing up, but she borrowed from the local library (reading “the whole of Dostoyevsky quite early on, but also a lot of trash,” she recalls) and knew that she was going to be a writer from the age of eleven. A place at the local girls’ grammar school helped insure that at least she would not end up a housecleaner, as her grandmother, mother, and stepsister had. Another break came when she spent three years away from the northeast, as a student at the London School of Economics. In 1969, while working as an adult-education teacher in Middlesbrough, she met David Barker, professor of zoology at the University of Durham, and a few years older than she. He rescued the discarded typescript of her first novel from the garbage pail, and five of her novels are dedicated to him. Now retired from teaching but active in research, he specializes in the regeneration of nerves. Through him, Pat Barker was introduced to the work of W. H. R. Rivers.



In Barker’s trilogy, inspired by the work of W. H. R. Rivers, the First World War is the test tube of the modern spirit.

GLADYS PERINT PALMER

It was in her thirties, while raising a son and a daughter, that she began to write fiction seriously. For a decade, she recalls, her novels—“rather refined and sensitive”—collected rejection slips. Then, in 1979, she attended her first creative-writing course—a week at the Arvon Foundation, in Lumb Bank, Yorkshire. The tutor was the novelist Angela Carter, to whom she showed a section of what would become her first novel, “Union Street.” Though Carter herself inclined to a more fabulist mode, she encouraged Barker to stick to what she knew: working-class women’s lives in the northeast.

DESPITE the contemporary setting and the stolid prose, there is an air of “Sons and Lovers” about “Union Street”: the depressed, rain-driven streets; the men coming home drunk and violent from the pub; the women who must variously cope with sexual molestation, the trauma of childbirth, the violence of marriage, the bleakness of widowhood, poverty, age, sickness, and death. The novel is big on unwanted pregnancy, and there is a particularly gruesome description of a back-street abortion. (A 1989 film adaptation, Martin Ritt’s “Stanley and Iris,” transformed the material beyond recognition.)

Most of the energy in Barker’s early work comes from the dialogue, an authentic Teesside vernacular. Her second novel, “Blow Your House Down,” is told through the voices of a group of prostitutes who try to do business as usual while a serial killer stalks their streets. (The novel was inspired by the reign of terror of the Yorkshire Ripper, Peter Sutcliffe.) Where newspapers tend to portray such women as minor players made significant by having come into contact with a deeply fascinating male killer, Barker puts them center stage. The novel was produced as a play last February, and its director, a Vietnam War veteran, said that he had no trouble recognizing the dialogue: “combat talk,” he called it.

When Barker began “Regeneration,” she thought of it as a self-contained book about Rivers and Sassoon that would "make a perfect figure of eight." Finishing it, she realized that there was more to come, and rewrote the ending to make it open and tentative. She originally hoped to write "an entirely noncombatant account" of the First World War. Though she fails in this, giving over the last part of "The Ghost Road" to Billy Prior's diary of his return to the front in 1918, and his death on the Sambre-Oise Canal, her view of the war is very different from that of the soldier-poets—Owen, Sassoon, Graves, Isaac Rosenberg, Edward Thomas—who wrote of the muddy trenches and the mowed-down flower of youth. What interests her is the vulnerability of her male characters—the fears they'll confess only to a shrink. The British state, too, far from being a nation united against a common enemy, is consumed by fear and paranoia. "The Eye in the Door," the second novel in the trilogy, examines a plot by a female pacifist to assassinate the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, with a curare-tipped dart. This is the kind of repressed historical episode that Barker extracts from her nation's troubled psyche.

Among her greatest assets is the character Billy Prior, upwardly mobile and acutely sensitive to snobbery. At one point, he hears a fellow-officer refer to the working classes as the W.C.s ("W.C." also meaning water closet). These are his own people. Is he supposed to join in the derision?

> One of the ways in which he felt different from his brother officers, one of the many, was that their England was a pastoral place: fields, streams, wooded valleys, medieval churches surrounded by ancient elms. They couldn't grasp that for him, and for the vast majority of the men, the Front, with its mechanization, its reduction of the individual to a cog in a machine, its blasted landscape, was not a contrast with the life they'd known at home, in Birmingham or Manchester or Glasgow or the Welsh pit villages, but a nightmarish culmination.

British writers are often accused of malingering in the past. Even the chairman of the 1995 Booker judges, the maverick Conservative M.P. George Walden, made the charge in his speech on the night of the ceremony: "So few of the Booker entries tackled modern England. Are our writers, by their silence, making a point?" Nostalgia, he complained, "is becoming our heavy industry." But there are many reasons for looking at the past, and for Barker nostalgia is the least of them. One of her key stylistic decisions is to make her officers speak not in their adopted "mock-medieval facetious humor," but in current idiom: what she loses in historical accuracy she gains in linguistic vitality, eroding the discontinuities between then and now. She also writes about sex with candor and sensuality, abandoning what she calls "that special hushed, poetic voice which writers are supposed to use for lovemaking." The libidinous Prior is opportunistic, proud (unlike most men of his generation, he refuses to pay for sex), and guilt-free. He breaks one taboo by sleeping with a woman who suckled him as a child, and another when, having just failed to seduce a "silly bitch" called Myra in a London park, he goes to bed with a fellow-officer:

> He guided Manning's legs up his chest, being exceedingly careful not to jerk the [injured] knee. He was too eager, and the position was hopeless for control, he was fighting himself before he'd got an inch in, and then Manning yelped and tried to pull away. Prior started to withdraw, then suddenly realized that Manning needed to be hurt. "Keep still," he said, and went on fucking. It was a dangerous game. Prior was capable of real sadism, and knew it, and the knee was only an inch or so away from his hand. He came quickly, with deep shuddering groans, a feeling of being pulled out of himself that started in his throat. Carefully, he lowered Manning's legs and sucked him off.

This would look unexceptional in Edmund White or Alan Hollinghurst, but coming from a middle-aged woman it has provoked comment: How does Pat Barker come to know such stuff? She has been asked the question before, about the prostitutes in "Blow Your House Down," one of whom wipes vaginal secretion on a man's nose in order to arouse him. Beyond the prurience of the question lies the implication that this kind of territory, like war, is off limits to women writers. Barker, for her part, denies that there is any essential difference between men's writing and women's. Her own style has come a long way—she has learned from her gentlemen officers the pleasures of wit and irony—but it remains as styleless as possible. She seems to regard lyric flight as a bourgeois affectation. It's no coincidence that she calls herself Pat Barker,

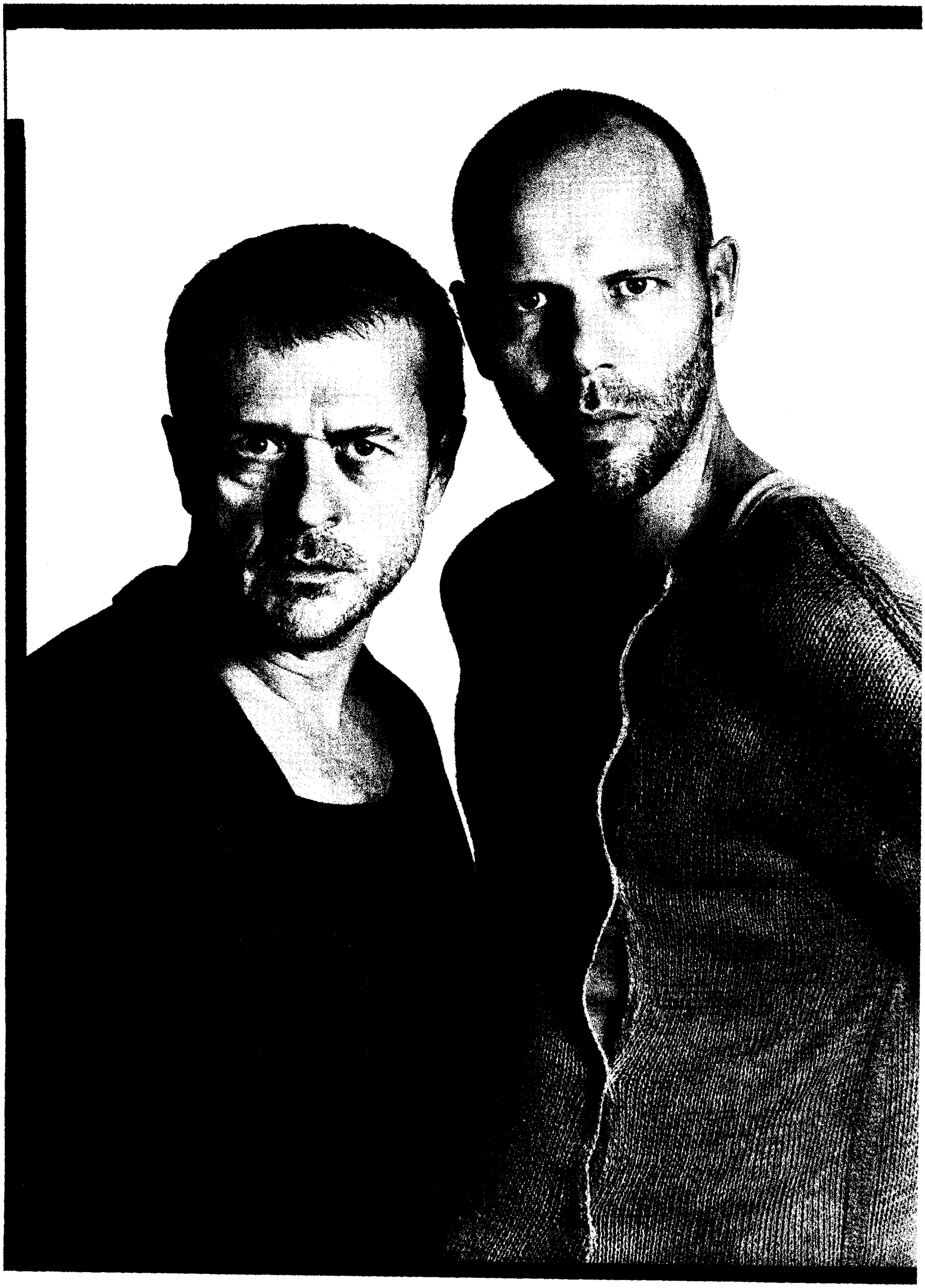
SHOWCASE
BY RICHARD AVEDON

MISE-EN-SCÈNE

NEW YORKERS have got used to seeing influential performing-arts productions long after they have played Boston, Berkeley, or Berlin, but it seems almost perverse that until now nothing staged by the French director Patrice Chéreau has made its way here. Chéreau's formidable reputation in the world of theatre and opera has meant little to New Yorkers, who know him, if at all, from a few films—the psychological drama "L'Homme Blessé," the sixteenth-century epic "Queen Margot." Chéreau's absence locally has been in part a problem of scale; his landmark opera productions, notably a 1976 "Ring," would have been too expensive to import. With his theatre work, the problem has been the broader one of translation—most regrettably, Chéreau says, in the case of Bernard-Marie Koltès, whose difficult, metaphorical plays the director has championed since they first captured his attention, in 1980. It is no surprise, then, that for his New York directorial début, next month at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Chéreau has chosen to present Koltès's 1987 piece "In the Loneliness of the Cottonfields," in its original French.

Even in French, the play's theatrical virtues are not immediately apparent. The text—a rather plotless encounter between two men, one called the Dealer (played by Chéreau himself), the other the Client (Pascal Greggory)—reads like a Diderot-esque dialogue about death and desire. For his first production of the play, almost a decade ago, Chéreau gave the weighty themes suitably weighty treatment, but the result left him unsatisfied. This time, he works with a stripped-down stage, bold lighting, and the dance-inspiring music of Massive Attack. Chéreau is pleased with the outcome, if a little exhausted. "I'm going back to making movies after this," he says. (His next film will involve a multigenerational, "Big Chill"-like story.) "We've been touring the Koltès since last spring, and it has been very demanding." —BRENDAN LEMON

Patrice Chéreau and Pascal Greggory, photographed in Paris.



not Patricia—nicely androgynous, and proletarian-plain.

Beneath her plainness lies a passionate belief that she has something new to say about an eighty-year-old war. And, undoubtedly, she does, although there is at times something very nineteen-nineties and predictable about her preoccupation with gender, emasculation, bisexuality, and role reversals. The impress of the present is there even in her portrayal of Rivers. "My attitude throughout the war had been clearly in favor of fighting until Germany recognized defeat," the real Rivers once wrote. Would he have been as self-accusing as Barker makes him? At one point, after observing a psychiatrist, Lewis Yealland, whose electric-shock methods are far more brutal and punitive than his own genteel therapy, he nonetheless questions how real the differences between them are, and anguishes over the morality of his work in "curing" warriors only so that they can return to the arena of battle. It is a dramatic episode, but a knowing and faintly stagey one.

Barker is more persuasive, and original, when she lets Prior and Rivers take her to unexpected places. In "The Ghost Road," this is to Eddystone Island, where Rivers, before the war, worked as an anthropologist; and to France, where Prior, back at the front, keeps the journal of his last days. If Prior, however brisk and unwhinging, makes us feel the pity and pointlessness of war, Rivers, by contrast, observes a tribe demoralized and in decline because of its abandonment of ancient warlike traditions, including head-hunting. This is a last twist in the long-running conversation between Rivers and Prior, and it raises an uncomfortable question: Whatever the waste of human life, isn't war fundamental to the human spirit? It's a dark and distinctly un-nineties thought with which to end this complex trilogy. ♦

DEWEY STILL?

An American thinker resurrected.

BY NAOMI BLIVEN

ALAN RYAN'S "John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism" (Norton; $30) is a rarity. Quietly brilliant, with intelligence that glows rather than glitters, it's a book about a professional philosopher by a professional philosopher which even the uninitiated can enjoy. Ryan begins by exploring the reasons that, in his lifetime, Dewey was anointed *the* American philosopher—our sage for all seasons—but after his death in 1952 was forgotten, except as a controversial theorist of education. This retrospect illuminates the dreams and desires of our parents and grandparents, and when Ryan goes on to discuss why today's philosophers are reconsidering Dewey's thought, we encounter our own dreams and desires on almost every page. For, as Ryan points out, the nineteen-nineties are strikingly similar to the eighteen-nineties, when technological innovation, immigration, the decay of cities, and politics both corrupt and unresponsive created a sense of crisis.

Alan Ryan

TOM BACHTELL

Although Ryan investigates the multitude of subjects on which Dewey wrote, the book's recurrent theme is liberalism, and it's clear that—among intellectuals, anyhow—Ryan sees the liberal tide rising once more. He gives Dewey's critics plenty of space and offers criticisms of his own. Yet he finds Dewey's enterprise—in Ryan's phrase, "to reconcile modern man to the modern world"—as inspiring as Dewey's democratic faith. Ryan traces the latter back to Dewey's boyhood in Burlington, Vermont, where he was born in 1859. Burlington was no sanctuary of town-meeting egalitarianism but a socially and economically stratified

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industrial community: "What provoked Dewey's passion for democracy was less the fact that it was taken for granted in his hometown than that it was under threat."

Dewey was shy, reticent, and absent-minded, and knew he wasn't, as Ryan puts it, "a *vivid* individual." Ryan makes him real enough, though, by re-creating the intellectual landscapes through which he moved, and, in tracing Dewey's development, Ryan shows a philosopher renouncing the quest for certainty. Dewey wasn't interested in whether the world corresponded to our ideas of it, nor did he think that any particular discipline—physics, say, or logic—mapped reality; he believed in using different approaches to solve different kinds of problems. Ryan contrasts Dewey's brand of pragmatism with the passion of his friendly enemy Bertrand Russell, who sought an absolute truth that existed whether or not humans knew it, and detested the idea of settling for Dewey's "warranted assertibility." Dewey also puzzled his way out of religious belief—his mother had raised him as a Calvinist Congregationalist—and he couldn't imagine why the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, his ally in the liberal anti-Communist struggles of the nineteen-thirties and forties, believed the doctrine of original sin. Yet Dewey never belittled the religious impulse. This made it possible for religious Americans to read his popular works as "lay sermons," encouraging democracy and education for democracy.

As a teacher and a theorist of education, Dewey rejected the old-fashioned schooling he had had, because it immobilized children in rote learning instead of teaching them to think. He wanted education to impart self-discipline and habits of coöperative problem solving, and to integrate children into society, not shelter them from it. Long before most of us were born, Dewey was thinking about multiculturalism and élitism. When he moved to the University of Chicago, in 1894, he became a trustee of Jane Addams's famous settlement, Hull House, and joined reformers working to bring impoverished immigrants and their children into the life of the nation. At the university, he founded a Laboratory School that ran for seven and a half successful years before several factors, including lack of money, combined to close it. A valid criticism of Dewey's educational theories, Ryan comments, is that they're expensive in practice. Another might be that Dewey was preparing children for an open, inclusive democratic society that didn't—and still doesn't—exist.

ALTHOUGH Ryan's endorsement falls short of a battle cry—he concludes that Dewey is "a rich source of intellectual nourishment for anyone not absolutely locked within the anxieties of his or her own heart and not absolutely despondent about the prospects of the modern world"—his description of Dewey's liberalism is as uplifting as an anthem:

> What makes it an optimistic and expansive liberalism is its insistence that the individual whom liberalism wants to encourage is neither the rip-off artist favored by the economic changes of the 1980s nor the narcissist bewailing (or for that matter celebrating) the state of his or her psyche. The individual it celebrates is someone who is thoroughly engaged with his or her work, family, local community and its politics, who has not been coerced, bullied, or dragged into these interests but sees them as fields for a self-expression quite consistent with losing himself or herself in the task at hand.

There's little to quarrel with and much to hope for in Ryan's catalogue. I have one objection, though. Ryan, like almost everybody else, keeps calling liberalism a middle way, as if mere middleness defined it—as if Dewey had deliberately measured and halved the distance between Marx and Spencer. He did nothing of the kind. As we watch Ryan's Dewey learning from books and people and events, we see him making his own choices and thinking his own thoughts, and if he was a "visionary," as Ryan says, he shaped his own vision. Dewey's liberalism is something other than a compromise between unacceptable orthodoxies; it is part of a living tradition. There are plenty of conflicts within that tradition, and Ryan doesn't think that Dewey resolved, or even saw, all of them. But it isn't hard for Ryan to persuade us that Dewey, very much a man of his time, still speaks to our own. ♦

Meanwhile, Richard Parker Bowles, brother of Camilla's ex-husband, Andrew, said that from the beginning Camilla approved of Charles' marrying Diana while she remained his power mower.

—*Richmond Times-Dispatch*

Now, *that's* amore.

BRIEFLY NOTED

A SOUTHERN EXPOSURE, by Alice Adams (Knopf; $23). A smart, immensely readable novel about lives unravelling in a Southern college town where there is an urgent conspiracy, on the eve of the Second World War, to keep things as they are. The author has a mimetic ear and a gimlet eye, and here, in her perceptive handling of character and tale, she uses both to show that while some ties between people and places are, unpredictably, irrevocable, others—just as unpredictably—are not.

INTO THE WILD, by Jon Krakauer (Villard; $23). The author meticulously reconstructs the travels of Chris McCandless, who, after graduating from college in 1990, abruptly estranged himself from his East Coast family and set out across the country. Two years later, he walked alone into the Alaskan interior, where he died of starvation. Krakauer—who vividly recalls his own youthful brush with "the siren song of the void"—explores McCandless's painful motivations and, without ignoring the family's bereavement, argues convincingly that the trip was not a reckless Jack London fantasy but an intensely felt pilgrimage that ended in misfortune.

AN UNCOMMON WOMAN, by Hannah Pakula (Simon & Schuster; $35). When Queen Victoria and Prince Albert conceived of a match between their eldest daughter, Vicky, and Frederick, Crown Prince of Prussia, they envisioned politically fractured Germany transformed by English progressivism. Seventeen-year-old Vicky, inspired by love for both her heritage and her husband, immediately shouldered the challenge, despite a court of hostile in-laws. Her ultimate position—mother of Kaiser Wilhelm II, aggressor against England—was tragic. But Pakula emphasizes irony over anguish, and Vicky's correspondence with Queen Victoria—who pronounces upon everything from Bismarck to breast feeding ("awful and disgusting")—reminds us, with a jolt, how entangled the private and the public can be.

FIST STICK KNIFE GUN: A PERSONAL HISTORY OF VIOLENCE IN AMERICA, by Geoffrey Canada (Beacon; $20). This wonderful book draws on its author's life as a South Bronx ghetto child who later attended Bowdoin and Harvard and now works with children in Harlem. Canada believes that no one is naturally predisposed to violence; he and his brothers learned its techniques in self-defense. Though he argues that ghettos need more policing by community members, he also demonstrates that it is possible to teach nonviolence. His language has a simplicity and directness that make it effective as literature without seeming "literary."

ODD MERCY, by Gerald Stern (Norton; $18.95). The poems in Stern's ninth collection are composed of equal parts rhapsodic catalogue, lamentation, and post-Yiddish shtick—the last of these employed by Stern, with perfect comic timing, to both enhance and moderate the other two. These disparate elements make for poems that are complex yet never obscure, disciplined yet never constrained, and so rich in minute particulars that lines such as "I hold the drop of water/and multiply and multiply it" seem not metaphorical but merely descriptive.

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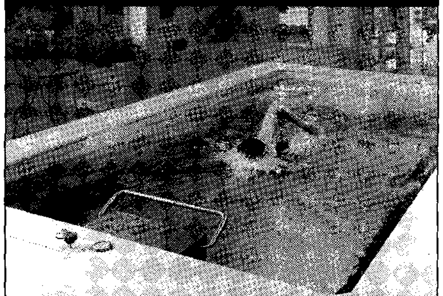

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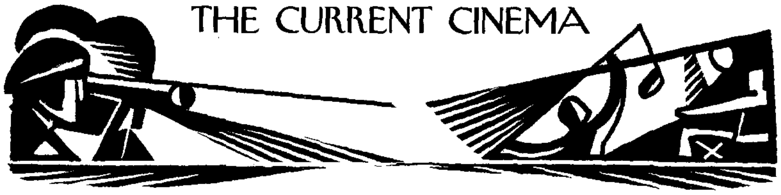


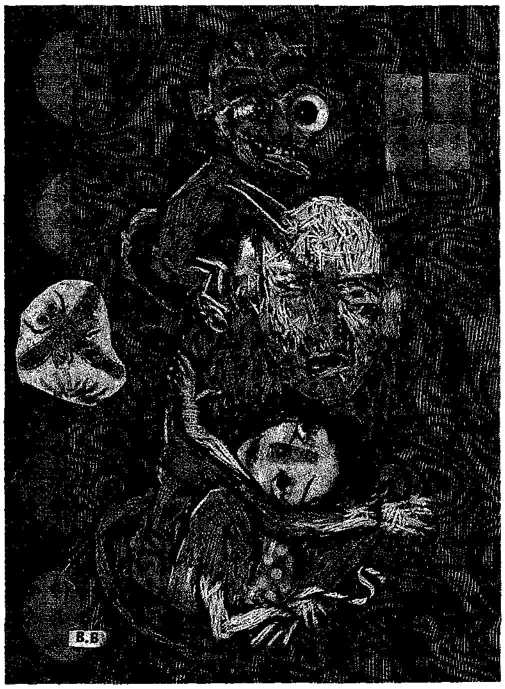
THE CURRENT CINEMA

TIME OUT OF JOINT

The hyperkinetic "12 Monkeys" and a Fascist-era "Richard III."

BY TERRENCE RAFFERTY

THE credits for Terry Gilliam's elaborate time-travel thriller "12 Monkeys" tell us that the movie was "inspired by the film 'La Jetée,' written by Chris Marker," and to those who know "La Jetée" that statement has an ominous ring. Marker's film (he also directed it), which was released in 1964, is an elegant science-fiction fable about memory and mortality; it runs twenty-nine minutes and is perfect. In "La Jetée" Marker—a French filmmaker whose eccentric and rather obscure career began in the fifties—imagines a world made uninhabitable by nuclear war; the survivors, living beneath the streets of Paris, look to the past and the future for relief from their grim, claustrophobic present. For reconnaissance missions to other times, the survivors' scientific élite select subjects whose memories are especially strong and vivid—even obsessive. The movie's nameless hero is haunted by a recurring image from his childhood: on the observation deck of Orly airport, he sees the face of a beautiful woman; a man (whose face he can't make out) running and then crumpling to the ground; a sudden and incomprehensible commotion in the crowd. In the course of several forays into the past, the hero meets the woman from his memories, falls in love with her, and resolves to go AWOL from the post-nuclear present. But the underground follows him through time and catches up with him at Orly; there, as his lover and his childhood self watch, he is gunned down. "He understood that you can't escape time," the narrator calmly explains, "and that the moment he had seen as a child, which had never stopped obsessing him, was that of his own death." The circle closes, and the screen goes dark.



Remembering the future: Bruce Willis and Madeleine Stowe in "12 Monkeys."

BETH BARTHOLOMEW

In expanding this simple, rigorously constructed story into a feature-length script, the writers of "12 Monkeys," David Peoples and Janet Peoples, necessarily violate its unique formal beauty. Turning "La Jetée" into a big-budget futuristic action picture starring Bruce Willis is inherently a quixotic project, like turning a sonnet into a "Die Hard" movie. To the screenwriters' credit, the complicated plot that they've worked out for "12 Monkeys" has its own logic and integrity, and even preserves, like insects fossilized in amber, a few poignant traces of Marker's metaphysical lyricism. In this picture, humanity has been devastated not by war but by an Ebola-like virus, and the mission of the hero, James Cole (Willis), is specific: he is to go back to 1996—the year of the outbreak—to gather information about the deadly virus and its source. The scientists who fire him into the past, however, are terrible marksmen, and he initially lands a few years beyond the target, in 1990, where, babbling about an epidemic that hasn't happened yet, he is immediately committed to a mental institution. There he arouses the interest of a gorgeous and unconventional psychiatrist, Dr. Kathryn Railly (Madeleine Stowe), and makes the acquaintance of a voluble paranoiac named Jeffrey Goines (Brad Pitt).

The early scenes of "12 Monkeys," set primarily in the subterranean dungeons and laboratories of the future and in the grungy, decrepit sanitarium, are chaotic, hallucinatory, and tedious—pure Terry Gilliam. Gilliam, who gained fame as the director of the berserk cartoon interludes in the Monty Python television show, brings an animator's sensibility to live-action filmmaking, and that's a mixed blessing, because the visual hyperbole and the runaway kineticism that give short cartoons their swift, comic force tend to lose effectiveness over the long haul of a feature film. He loads his images with outsized gestures, fantastic décor, and constant, frantic movement, and the aggressive style seems all wrong for the material. Despite the action-movie trappings of "12 Monkeys," the screenwriters essentially respect the spirit of "La Jetée," which is, inevitably, reflective. After all, this is the story of a man who yearns for the past so powerfully that it becomes his present and his future. Marker hit on a brilliant and heartbreakingly apt way of conveying his hero's time-devouring nostalgia: aside from a single fleeting moment of normal motion (the heroine opening her limpid eyes after sleep), "La Jetée" consists entirely of still photographs, which turn everything we see into an object of contemplation—an image, held and hoarded, of something vanished. Gilliam's frenzied manner, overwhelming us with noise and shock and teeming activity, subverts the story's meaning: the screenwriters, like Marker, try to explore the enigmatic truth of memory, while the director does his best to keep us focussed on bizarre, vivid sensation. In this picture, time travel has the illusory eventfulness of a virtual-reality trip, and memory has the false immediacy of an acid flashback.

If you're in the mood, you could find some entertainment value in this picture's evenly matched battle for coherence: Gilliam's relentless run-and-gun offense against the script's alert, intelligent defense. ("La Jetée" is the football here.) The writers prevail, narrowly. "12 Monkeys" seems to take forever to get going, but once the madhouse scenes are out of the way and Cole has been successfully deposited in the plague year of 1996 the movie picks up speed. The momentum is attributable partly to simple chase-picture mechanics—the hero kidnaps Dr. Railly and enlists her aid in his search for the virus, and they race against time together—and partly to the subtler power generated by an increasingly complex plot. Cole begins to suspect that the key to the mystery may lie in his own past—the past, that is, that he was thrust into when the defective time-travel apparatus dumped him in 1990. In the "right" time, he discovers that the lunatic Goines, now at large, has become the leader of a guerrilla animal-rights group called the Army of the 12 Monkeys, and that Goines's father (Christopher Plummer) is an eminent virologist; Cole starts to believe that an offhand remark of his in the asylum may have given the madman the idea that the human race deserved extermination. As the hero investigates this alarming hypothesis, the story's ironies start to ramify, and the pattern they make is so intricately pleasing that they seem to justify, retrospectively, those all but unendurable early sequences. The ultimate irony of "12 Monkeys" is that the movie induces a kind of amnesia. When the plot starts coming together, the memory of Gilliam's hysterical direction gradually fades and is replaced by a hazy impression of clever exposition: you almost *forget* how bad it was.

"12 Monkeys" benefits, too, from Willis's grave, restrained acting, which grows more resonant and moving as the picture goes along. In better than two hours, Willis barely cracks a smile, but the performance is never glum or monotonous. And his finest moments come near the end, when Cole, exhausted by temporal jet lag and crushed by guilty suspicions, tries to persuade himself that he really is crazy; Willis conveys the full force of the character's anguished desire to erase his consciousness, to deny the reality of everything he knows. Stowe, in a tricky part, makes quick, graceful transitions between comic effects and dramatic ones, and her composure helps give the picture an illusion of tonal consistency. But nothing can

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purge the memory of Brad Pitt's performance—a horror that persists in the mind like a childhood trauma. Pitt flings himself about heedlessly, babbling and twitching in a coarse, garish caricature of madness. His readings are inept, and his "spastic" gestures are even worse. (Aren't there any straitjackets in this asylum?) But it's hard not to see him as the onscreen embodiment of Terry Gilliam's hyperkinetic approach to filmmaking. Despite some striking ideas, "12 Monkeys" is finally no more than a flamboyant curiosity, replacing the spooky obsessiveness of "La Jetée" with a much tamer kind of weirdness. Marker captures the hypnotic rhythm of memory; Gilliam just kills time.

ALL the characters in the new "Richard III" look as baffled and forlorn as the hero of "12 Monkeys" does in the madhouse scenes, and for pretty much the same reason: they're the hapless victims of a time-travel experiment gone wrong. This fancy production—directed by Richard Loncraine, from a stage version directed by Richard Eyre—transports the scheming nobles of fifteenth-century England to the nineteen-thirties and dresses the villainous protagonist in a Fascist's black shirt. Richard, Duke of Gloucester (Ian McKellen), does what he has always done in Shakespeare's sanguinary chronicle: after assassinating everyone (man or child) who stands between him and the throne, he becomes king, but not for long—he dies in battle at the hands of his many enemies. The Fascist regalia seems oddly beside the point. The notion that Richard is a vicious thug certainly isn't a fresh insight, and the swanky costumes and décor ultimately create more distractions than revelations: for most of the movie, you can't help wondering whether this Richard, in his battlefield death scene, will have to cry out, "My kingdom for a jeep!" (He doesn't, but the scene is plenty silly nonetheless.) The obtrusive ingenuity of the theatrical concept gives the whole spectacle a preening, self-infatuated quality—an inexpressive veneer of chic.

Did McKellen, the prime mover of both the stage production and the film, simply not want to hobble around in the usual unflattering tights? Or did someone whisper the phrase "the banality of evil" in his ear? For his Richard is a dull, efficient, affectless sort of monster. It's brave of McKellen to play the role so coldly and so quietly, and to define himself so starkly against the electrifying, protean Richard that Laurence Olivier brought to the screen in 1955. McKellen politely declines to chew the scenery, and although he reads the lines impeccably, his abstemiousness leaves the movie looking thin and undernourished. The play is basically a rip-roaring melodrama with a memorable bad guy; its success, as Olivier understood, depends entirely on the audience's fascination with the startling animal vitality of Richard's malevolence. We should laugh in delight and horror at the villain's attempt to court Lady Anne (here Kristin Scott Thomas), whose husband and father-in-law he has murdered; and for that audacious scene to work we have to feel that his appalling magnetism is potent enough to win the grieving widow over. As the charmless McKellen and the wan Thomas play it, Anne's capitulation is wholly incomprehensible; not a breath of sexual passion is visible in the chilly mortuary air.

Among the supporting actors, the results are variable. Nigel Hawthorne, as the martyred Clarence, and Jim Broadbent, as Richard's co-conspirator Buckingham, acquit themselves honorably (though not so honorably that they make you forget the extraordinary Clarence and Buckingham of the Olivier version: John Gielgud and Ralph Richardson). And Maggie Smith, as the protagonist's mother, the Duchess of York, artfully balances fear of Richard and disdain for him in her few brief scenes. The only other performer who makes much of an impression in this enervated production is Annette Bening, who plays Richard's sister-in-law, Queen Elizabeth: Bening butchers every line she utters; the poetry dies on contact with her tongue. Although Loncraine and McKellen, who are credited with the script, have cut the play's text ruthlessly, they have inexplicably provided Elizabeth with several long, complex scenes, thus emphasizing the picture's worst performance. The new "Richard III" is as unnaturally proportioned as its hunchbacked central character, who, by his own description, is: "Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time / Into this breathing world, scarce half made up, / And that so lamely and unfashionable / That dogs bark at me as I halt by them." This movie is so misshapen it could make basenjis howl. ♦

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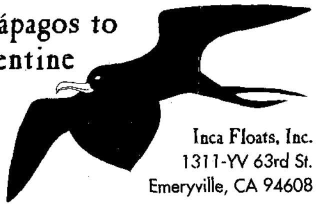

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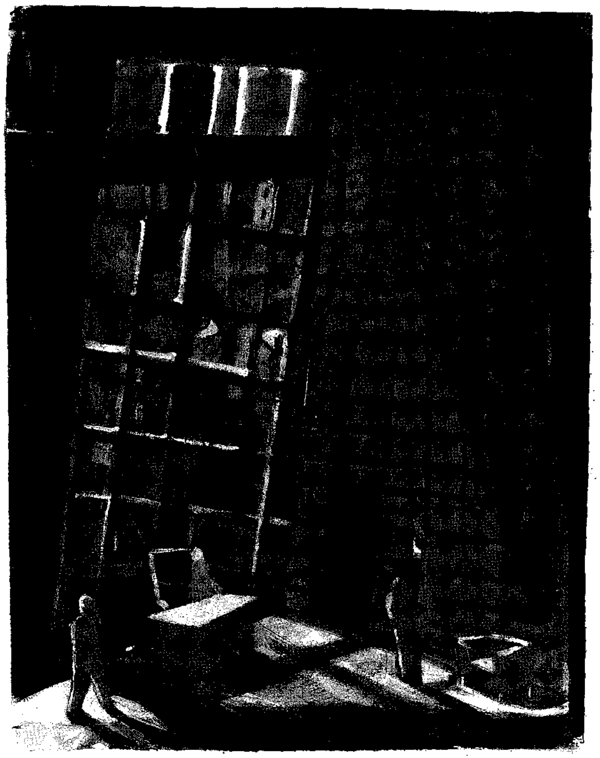
MUSICAL EVENTS

MORTALITY AND LONGEVITY

Death intrudes, but "The Makropulos Case" goes on.

BY PAUL GRIFFITHS

MUSIC and theatre change the way time feels. Life can do that, too. Nobody who was at the Met on January 5th—when we were expecting to see the first performance there of Janáček's "The Makropulos Case"—will forget how, after just a few minutes, the opera stopped. It can't have taken more than a second for Richard Versalle, alone onstage as the lawyer's clerk Vítek in the opening scene, to fall the ten feet from his position on a ladder against the filing cabinets that stretched up one whole side of the set. But a second can be a long time. The first thought was that his fall must be a daring stunt. Then it was clear that he was going down on his back; his black jacket flapped like a wing. Then the intolerable thud. Then the intense interval of anxiety while the orchestra seemed to be going on as if everything were quite normal.



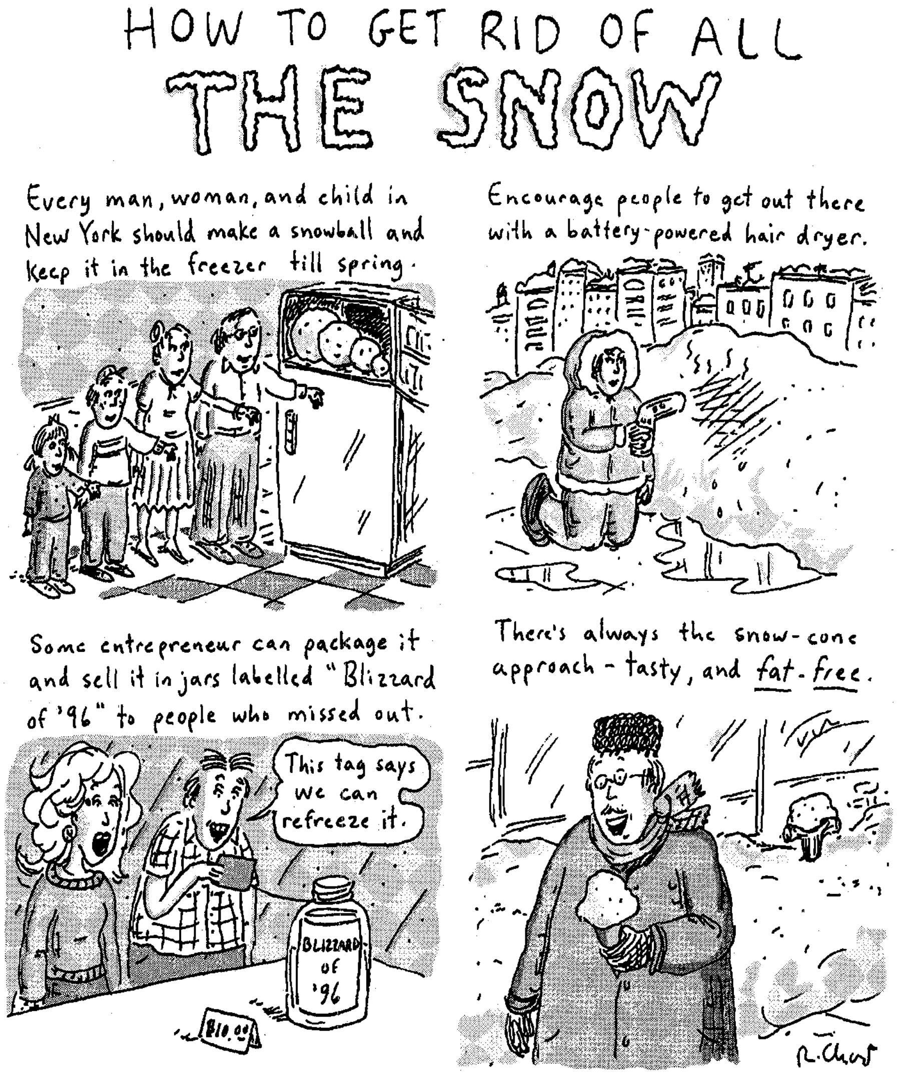
A music of nets across light: Anthony Ward's set design for "Makropulos."

ANDREA VENTURA

It was hard to think about anything outside that tight second over the next few days: what could you do other than rerun the internal movie again and again and again? To witness a death is to be called to account. To witness a death in public—along with four thousand other people, all of them watching, because that's what a split second ago they were there for—is to be implicated in a kind of humiliation. What did you feel? What did you learn? What do you know? Numb. A fact. A man died.

There are terrible ironies here. "The Makropulos Case" is about a woman who has lived more than three centuries, thanks to having been the guinea pig for her father's elixir of life. She craves death, because a life that's endless is also meaningless. And the line Mr. Versalle had just sung was this: "You can only live so long." The ironies help to give a pattern to what happened, but that pattern is a false one. The opera, the heroine, and the line could have been different; they were all accidental circumstances.

Other patterns would interpret the event as drama or tragedy. You understand why the *Post's* front-page headline the next day should have to be "Death at the Opera," but that's not how it was. It was too little for drama and too much. And only those who were close to Mr. Versalle, as friends, family, or colleagues, can properly feel his death as tragic in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their own lives. For the rest of us, there was the demonstration that death is stupid. It may, as Elina Makropulos urgently claims, give sense to life, but in itself it is senseless, sudden, irresponsible.

HAVING lost one performance to catastrophe—since, following Mr. Versalle's fall, surely the singers couldn't have gone on, and the audience wouldn't have wanted them to—the Met had to cancel the scheduled second, three days later, on account of the snow. Third time lucky, the production opened last Thursday, and it wasn't a surprise to find that the staging of the first scene had been altered. Ronald Naldi, the new Vítek, was securely seated at a desk, and he had a silent minion—a lawyer's clerk's clerk—to keep him company. There would have been an excuse for nerves in his performance, but no, he sang and acted vividly. He got us through. And he set us on the right track by understanding how the fussy, busy quality of Janáček's vocal writing doesn't obscure—may even protect—the longer-term interests of lyricism and reminiscence. This is music of nets across light.

Just at the moment, there's a lot of it about. A new staging—though different in almost every conceivable way from the Met's—is in repertory at the Chicago Lyric Opera, where it closes on Friday, and there was a production at Glyndebourne last summer. Possibly, this is simply one of those coincidences that are inevitable when so many companies are choosing from so few operas. There's also the point that "The Makropulos Case" is the obvious next step in the slow general establishment of Janáček as a major operatic composer. You begin with "Jenůfa" or "Katya Kabanova," because those are pieces with strong, clear narratives on opera's favorite themes of love and death; or else you start with "The Cunning Little Vixen," which will bring in the family audience, because it's got animals in it. Then, oh dear, it's time for "Makropulos."

Alternatively, and more positively, we can see "Makropulos"—a peculiar opera, even by Janáček's standards—as speaking with particular force and moment to an age of confusion and disintegration, an age when all values and messages and ideals are in question, when the ground has slipped from under us and we have to piece together a terrain, as Janáček pieced together his score. Not only its fractured nature makes "Makropulos" timely but also the disposition of the central character: the singer Emilia Marty—born in 1585 as Elina Makropulos, and having moved along under various E.M. pseudonyms in order to disappear from lives that cannot end in death—is entirely the creation of herself. As such, she has no trust in anything. Her own feelings mean as little to her as those of other people: in three hundred and thirty-seven years (the opera follows the original play, by Karel Čapek, in accepting 1922 as the year when the events take place), she has had time to experience everything. Almost unable to feel, she is also almost unable to enjoy anymore the cynic's sport of playing games with those around her.

Why, then, does she bother to sing? One reason must be that she has one intention left, one unrealized ambition, which is to die. When she sings of and to her own purposes, this is her object. However, much of what she sings seems to be devoted to telling us, the audience, what has been going on during the past three centuries, and here, wrapped up together, are two further ways in which "The Makropulos Case" is a distinctly modern piece. It doesn't hide the fact that it's a performance. And it proceeds on two time scales at once. The three acts unfold sequentially through what could well be an Aristotelian twenty-four-hour period, and yet they lead us further and further into the past—first, through a century of legal wrangling over an inheritance, and then back two centuries more.

Emilia Marty also sings because that's the way of sirens. She's there to fascinate everyone else onstage (and, of course, everyone in the auditorium). Most of the leading male characters succumb to her. Janek, hardly more than a boy, kills himself. His father, Prus, gets her to bed, only to be disgusted by her callousness. Albert Gregor, who is Prus's opponent in the law case, plays her as she plays him: theirs is the most equal relationship. Hauk-Šendorf returns, lost in memories of an infatuation decades before. Even the secondary female character, the young singer Kristina, is ensnared in much the same way, for though what she feels for Marty is professional idolization, such attraction is not far from sexual.

As an ice-cold femme fatale with multiple victims—and as one who sings as ice sings, clearly and brilliantly—Emilia Marty has a lot in common with the Lulu of Berg's opera. Of course, Janáček's is a different sort of decadence, a sprightly decadence. Still, the parallels are striking. Both composers were hopelessly in love with happily married women, and made their operas as portraits of those women. Both works seem to be portraits, too, of their genre—portraits of opera as a thrill, a challenge, and a potential to drive composers wild. Even Makropulos-Marty's dates fit this scenario. When she took her father's potion, at the age of sixteen, the Florentine camerata was giving birth to the art of opera. She could have sung in the first performance of Monteverdi's "Orfeo."

Marty's longevity has come to be taken as justification for senior divas to assume the role: at Glyndebourne, Anja Silja; in Chicago, Catherine Malfitano; at the Met, Jessye Norman. To be sure, all these singers have the presence and the command to suggest a woman long used to stardom, but Marty is perpetually sixteen, and Janáček's music for her appears to be anticipating lightness and agility, a quicksilver flow. Ms. Norman rises magnificently to the task, and the chance to hear those characteristic luscious sounds dancing by like glittering reflections is rare and splendid. However, there's not much opportunity in the part for what this singer is best at, and the production's enthronement of her as a sacred monument—especially in the second act, when she spends a good deal of time sitting elevated between the paws of a sphinx—comes perilously near parody.

Ms. Norman also fails to get very many of the words across, but in that she's hardly alone. Graham Clark, performing with his usual incisiveness as Gregor, does well by the text; so do Stephanie Blythe and Ara Berberian in their comic moment as theatre cleaner and stagehand. Otherwise, there doesn't seem much point in having the opera sung in English—and there certainly should be a point, since Janáček clearly meant his music to project his libretto, and the delivering of verbal information is crucial to the drama. Titles can't help—not when the trick of the text is in timing and tone of voice.

Timing and tone are essential here because they're both so mutable. The long dialogue between Marty and Prus in the second act, for example, is a sequence of scenes, each lasting about five seconds. These people have known each other a long time. Everything they say is loaded with innuendo. They can skip from one slant to another and never lose each other. One wonders how much Janáček could have been influenced by the cinema, and certainly there's a great film to be made of "The Makropulos Case." However, the swiftness could be realized in the theatre, given audible words, and a staging less comatose than the Met's. Presumably, Elijah Moshinsky, who directs, brought the action forward in order to help the singers deliver the text, but the effect is to render everything in a shallow, high space. Anthony Ward, the set designer, fills the height with spectacle—the filing cabinets, the sphinx, and, finally, the sloping windows of a penthouse suite—but what's happening at ground level is desultory and disinclined to speed. Yet speed a production must have in order to respond adequately to the piece and empower, not deny, its flickering between pathos and farce. (David Alden's Chicago production goes another way, and, by placing the action firmly in a theatre onstage, has us all, cast and audience, watch with mingled humor and contempt—not quite the same as pathos and farce—as a great ship sinks.)

What remains exciting at the Met—though exciting, as yet, more for its promise—is the orchestral contribution. David Robertson, conducting here for the first time, appreciates the zest and the momentum of Janáček's music, its restlessness in exploring ironies and escaping them: he was daring and right, for example, to saturate the big love theme in the overture with strains of Hollywood, and so set the music on its own trail through misdirections and pretenses. But the orchestra needs time to get accustomed to the music's acute angles. In Janáček, even a flinch should be beautiful. ♦

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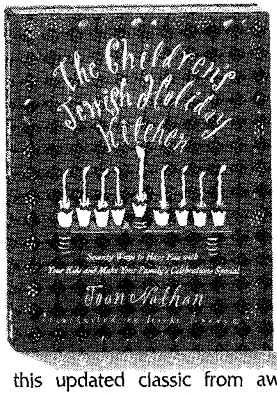

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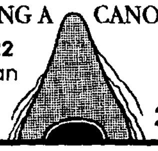

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

OTHER SNOWS

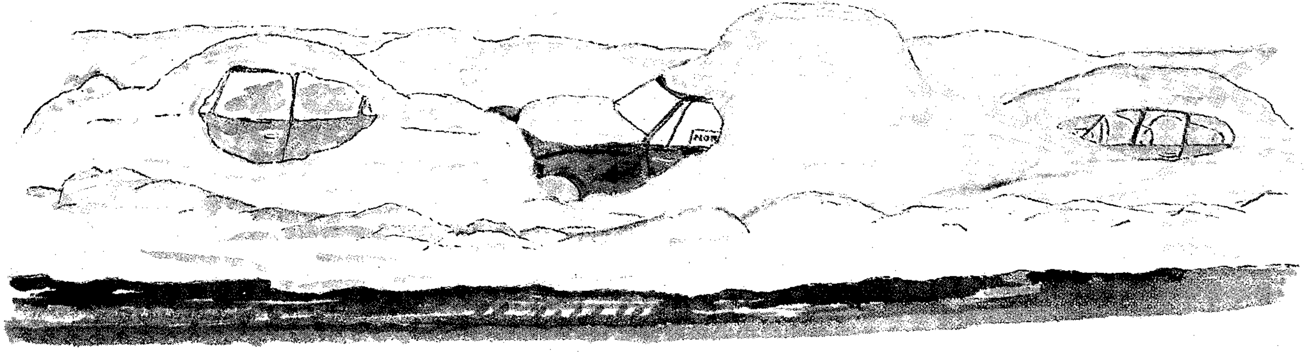
BY JOHN McPHEE

SNOW. It's hard for me to believe the Weather Channel that the falling blowing stuff of the moment may be the most on record—for New York City, that is, and central New Jersey (visibility a hundred feet, ceiling zero), where I am hunkered on the ground. I have actually been hunkered here for six and a half decades, with departures to other snows. I went into the city in my teens, in the forties, to see Bud Palmer drop the long one-hander from the Ninth Avenue-and-Fiftieth corner of Madison Square Garden, and got up in the morning in a friend's apartment to look down on white blisters of cars completely buried in snow. I remember snow in the city in the nineteen-fifties so deep that nothing but pedestrians moved. During another blizzard of the fifties—a storm so effective that it shut down every airport, railroad, and major highway in the Middle Atlantic and Northeastern states—the sentinel blimps of the United States Navy were the only means of transportation able to move, and they were transporting nobody; they were out over the North Atlantic to alert us to surprise attacks.

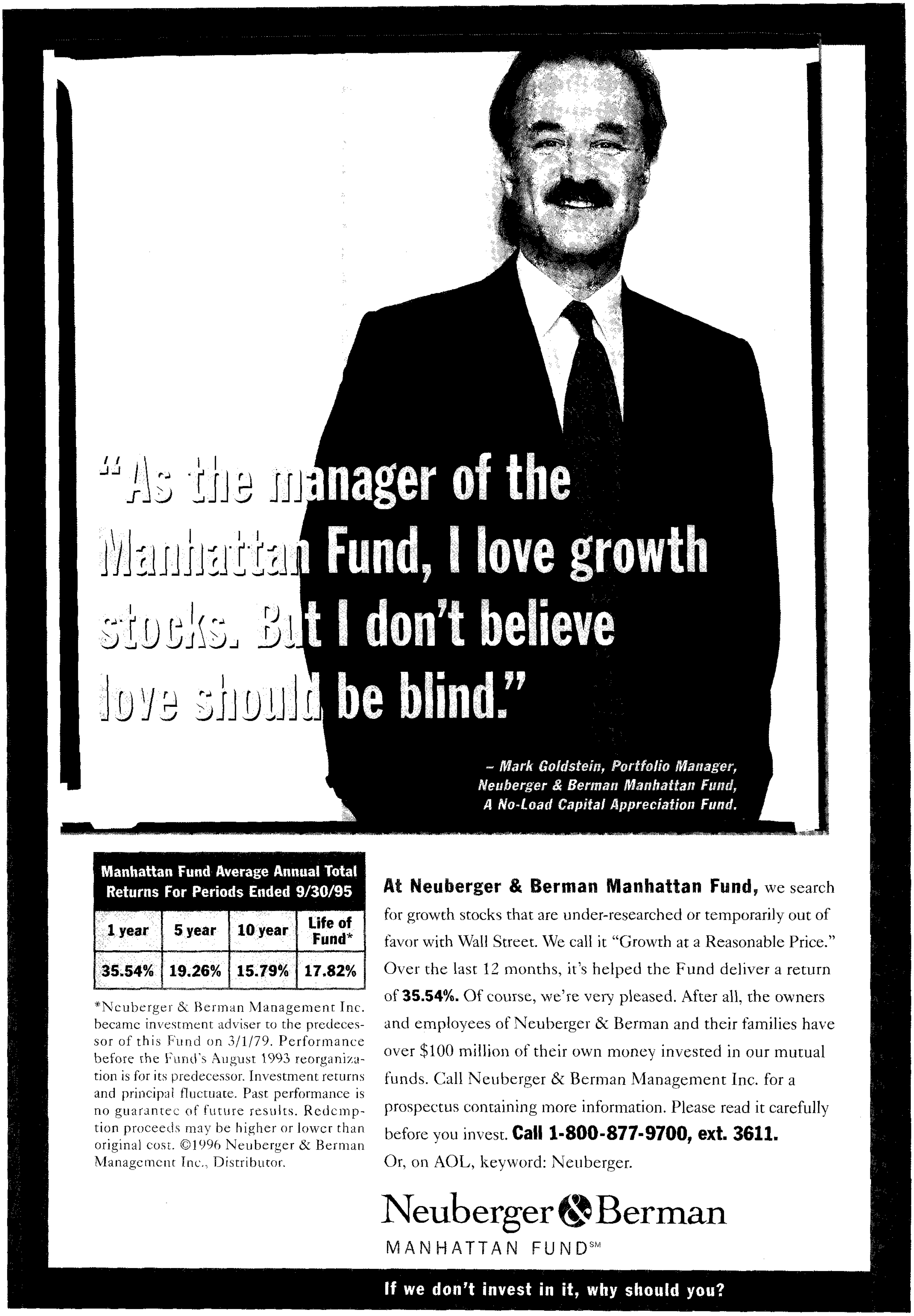
At home in New Jersey, I have been snowed in for as many as three days, but that has less to do with record storms than it has to do with New Jersey's record. In the eighties, my wife and I spent a night in New York and returned to find our car at the junction up to its headlights in snow. We took a taxi to a sporting-goods store, where, as it happened, we had put in an order for cross-country skis and boots. We picked them up while the taxi waited, and it took us to the head of our road, which, as we had imagined, was under three feet of drifted snow. Dressed for the theatre, we skied the mile home.

In the seventies, I spent a February and part of March near the Arctic Circle in Alaska, where the winter lacked the savagery it can loose on New York. The dry cold of the Alaskan interior doesn't bite as hard, even at low temperature, as a stiff bitter wind in Times Square. The air is so still for so long in Alaska that snow in light loaves on the spruce boughs can be destroyed completely with a smaller puff of breath than would blow out a candle.

If the snow falling now is to set some sort of mark and cover up cars, it has a long way to go; it has yet to reach the height of a tire. Records are where you find them, and for me—now come up here by the stove, daughters, while I finish this story—my personal best, as a runner would say, was not in New York and not in Alaska but in Benson, Minnesota. In March, 1965, I was riding the Empire Builder, of the old Great Northern Railway, west out of Chicago for Portland, because in those days I was afraid to fly. Those days ended near Benson, where the train, which for a hundred miles had ground valiantly into the deepening whiteness, was stopped—you guessed it—cold. The snow outside the windows was higher than the train. Eventually, we would learn that this was one of the greatest snowstorms in the history of Minnesota. Some hours after the heating system failed, the train crew built fires on the steel plates between cars. It didn't matter that the doors were open. The cold within had matched the cold without, and all along the train—like some sort of encampment—the fires burned above the couplings. We warmed ourselves there by turns, and went back to our frigid seats. We ate warm meals in the ice-cold dining car. Enough booze to build an empire was offered freely to all. Gradually, a snow remover worked its way south to rescue us, sucking up and blowing away its own small blizzard, its advance expressible in feet per hour. It reached us the next day, and at last we moved slowly forward, between high walls of snow that threatened to cave in on the train. The snow in Benson was deeper than roofs, and whole neighborhoods were all but hidden, the houses of Minnesota like the cars of New York—just rows of blisters under snow. ♦



VICTORIA ROBERTS



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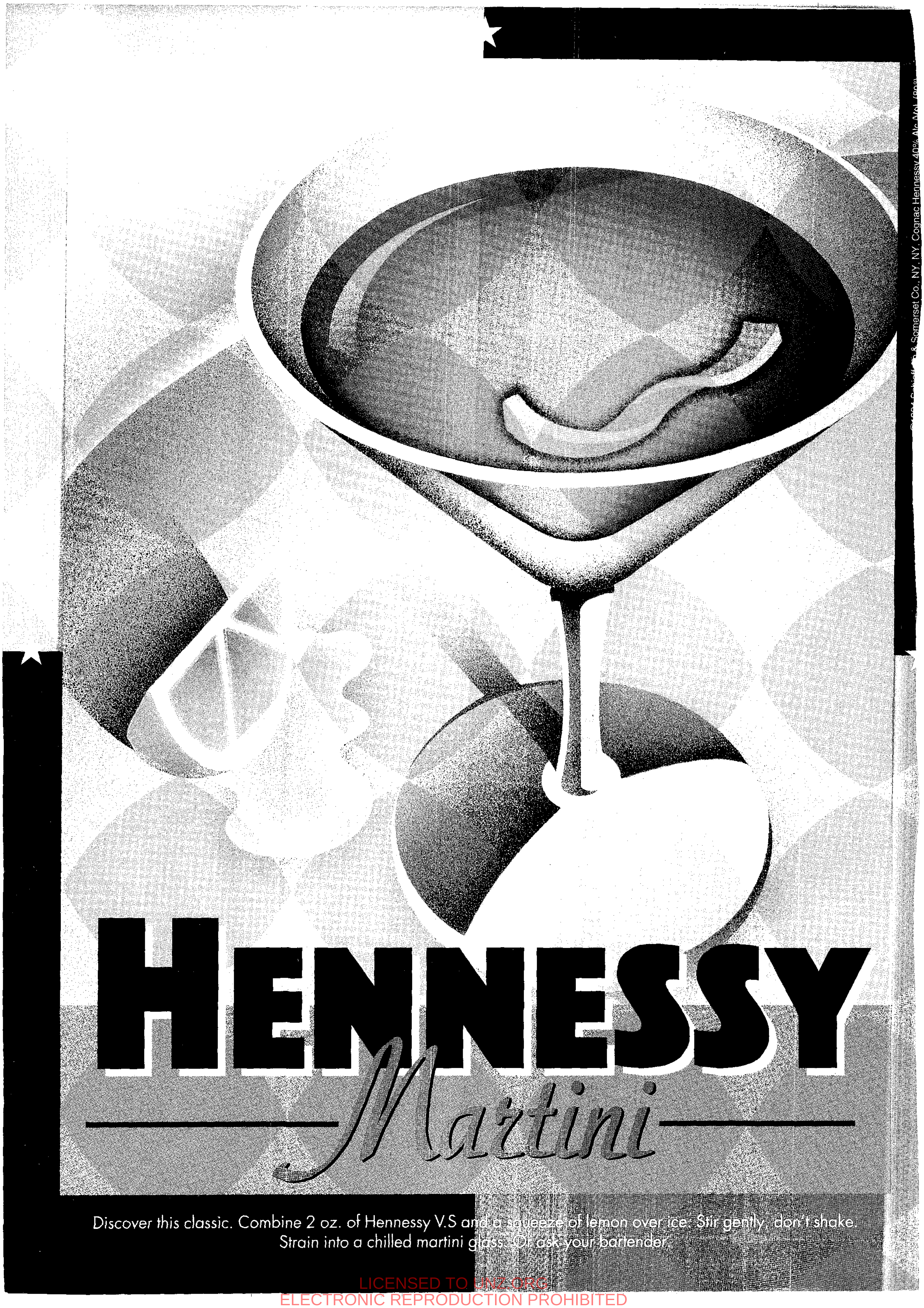

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